



# GSU News

Everyone does better when EVERYONE does better Issue 4 - 2012



## GSU formed a Movember team to raise funds for prostate cancer research.

You can follow the progress of the **Great Stache Union** or make a donation under the Member Services/Movember link on GSU's web page at [www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca).

(L-r) Team Great Stache Union members on Day 1: GSU staff rep Steve Torgerson, sub-local 1.3 (Viterra - Moose Jaw) president Brett North, and sub-local 1.12 (Viterra - Carnduff) president Willie Harris. Missing from photo: Sub-local 1.10 (Viterra - Raymore) vice-president and team member Wes Pearce.

## Inside

GSU educational conference planned for spring 2013 .....	2
Seasonal layoffs? Don't wait to apply for benefits .....	4
Do unions defend lazy workers? .....	5
Court of Appeal hears vacation pay arbitration decision .....	6
Would you wear this shirt? .	6

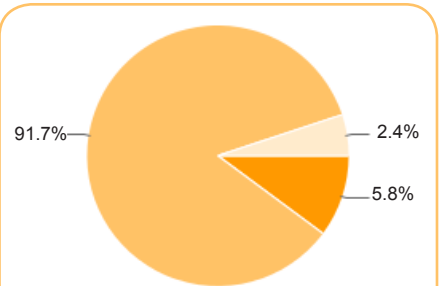
## Labour legislation to be introduced in fall session of Saskatchewan Legislature

On May 2, 2012, the government of Saskatchewan began a review of 15 pieces of labour legislation in the province. Even though the 90-day timeframe for public input was problematic, GSU and many other unions in Saskatchewan made written submissions regarding changes to Saskatchewan labour legislation. GSU's brief is posted on the union's web site at [www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca). Ultimately more than 3,800 submissions were made by organizations and individuals across the province.

In addition, nine representatives from organized labour have actively participated in the Advisory Committee to the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety in connection with the 15 Acts and over 900 pieces of legislation. GSU is represented by general secretary Hugh Wagner.

An equal number of business/ employer representatives, plus one community representative, also participated in the Advisory Committee. In what might be a surprise to many there was a high degree of consensus in the Advisory Committee deliberations.

The dialogue with Honourable Don Morgan, Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety was thoughtful and respectful



We asked GSU members:

**Should the government legislate how union dues are spent, or should decisions on spending union dues remain the business of the people who pay union dues?**

- 91.7% say union members should dictate how their union dues are spent
- 5.8% say the government should legislate how union dues are spent
- 2.4% say they are not sure

even while many potentially contentious subjects were covered. It is hoped that the legislation ultimately brought forward by the government will reflect the consensus in the Advisory Committee's work.

It is expected the government of Saskatchewan will introduce legislation touching on a significant number of subjects late in the fall session of the legislative assembly. What will change and what will remain the same is yet to be seen, but all concerned will be watching closely. Will the legislation to be introduced reflect your views on the subjects to be addressed?

(Continued on page 3.)

# The inside scoop


## Did you attend your annual general membership meeting?

If you attended your annual meeting you will know that it is an important opportunity to voice your opinions and to lay the course for the next year by electing representatives who reflect your views.

These meetings provide a unique forum to ask employer-specific questions about issues in your workplace and get an answer from our GSU staff reps and officers.

GSU's annual meetings are casual and interactive. Member participation is encouraged. Perhaps you are more comfortable sitting back and letting others lead the discussion, and that is okay, too. Your spouse is always welcome to attend, because we know decisions in your working life affect your family.

As we head into the busy holiday season it is difficult to prioritize and find time to fit everything in. I hope you see the value in your annual membership meeting and you were able to squeeze one into your schedule.

  
Hugh Wagner,  
GSU general secretary



# GSU News

### Editors

Hugh Wagner  
Lynn Woods-Nordin

### GSU Elected Officers

President Carolyn Illerbrun  
Vice-President Jim Brown  
Vice-President Mandy Windecker  
General-Secretary Hugh Wagner

### GSU Office Locations

2334 McIntyre Street  
Regina, SK S4P 2S2

2154 Airport Drive  
Saskatoon, SK S7L 6M6

### Email Address

gsu.regina@sasktel.net

### Web Page

www.gsu.ca

### Fax Numbers

306.565.3430 Regina  
306.384.1006 Saskatoon

### Phone Numbers

866.522.6686 Toll-free Regina  
306.522.6686 Regina

855.384.7314 Toll-free Saskatoon  
306.384.7314 Saskatoon

GSU News is produced and printed  
in-house by GSU staff members.

Printed November 26, 2012.

## Upcoming events

### Bargaining updates are always available at [www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca)

Check the GSU web page at [www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca) for upcoming meetings and updates on bargaining in your GSU local.

These four GSU Locals are currently in bargaining

- **Grain Millers** (Local 4 - Yorkton)
- **Heartland** (Local 7)
- **HiPro Feeds** (Local 9 - Chilliwack)
- **Viterra** (Local 1 Operations & Maintenance / Local 2 - Regina Head Office).

### Attend our 2013 GSU educational conference



GSU officers and staff are preparing a GSU educational conference for spring 2013.

The atmosphere will be casual, the education components will be interactive and interesting, and all GSU members are eligible to attend.

Talk to your elected officers or your GSU staff rep to learn more or to let them know you might be interested in attending.

Upcoming events are also posted regularly on the GSU web page at [www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca).

# Cubicle culture: 13 essential office etiquette reminders

When you work with the same people day after day, month after month, sometimes people can become so familiar with each other that they can start to act quite disrespectfully. Think that you're being unreasonably uptight with your coworkers? Or maybe the offender is actually you?

To maintain a professional atmosphere follow these do and don'ts of office and cubicle etiquette.

- Don't discuss personal or confidential matters. It is very easy to be overheard. Have sensitive issue conversations in a private office or on your cell phone during a break away from the office environment.
- Don't barge into cubicles. Knock on the inside of the cubicle wall and even say "knock, knock" or "Is this is a good time to interrupt?"
- Don't shout to colleagues over the top. Walk over to the person you want to talk to, phone or send an e-mail.
- Don't use the speakerphone. Listening to music while on hold or recorded messages can be very annoying to others in the office. Though convenient for you, taking calls "hands-free" is disturbing everyone else.
- Let people know when you are concentrating and wish not to be disturbed. Have a series of signs you hang on the cubicle wall to let your colleagues know the best time to return. "Under deadline, return at 4PM" or "On an important call."
- Remember you are on display. Keep your personal appearance and desk neat. You are in a fish bowl.
- Invest in high-quality headphones. These can block out extraneous noise.
- Turn off audio sounds on the computer. Prevent a cacophony from happening.
- Check with the people around you to see that your radio is not disturbing anyone. Or don't play a radio.
- Don't sing, whistle, or have loud conversations.
- Candies attract visitors and lolly gagers. You aren't Betty Crocker so don't feel like you need to feed the masses. It's nice to be nice, but do you really need the interruptions?
- Face away from the opening. If you can't face away from the doorway, get your walls heightened or train yourself not to look up at everyone who walks by. Passersby needn't greet visible cubicle dwellers when they walk by either.
- You might love your leftover garlic seafood stew, but smelly foods can be bothersome to people sitting nearby. If you must bring it to work, at least eat it in the kitchen and not at your desk.

Remember that even though you go there every day, and you personalize your space, the workplace is still not your home. It's a shared environment.

Make yourself comfortable, but not *too* comfortable.

*Internet article by Colleen Clarke | Workopolis.com.*

## Labour legislation to be introduced in fall session of Saskatchewan Legislature

*(Continued from page 1.)*

In July GSU conducted an on-line survey of union members and an overwhelming majority of survey respondents were opposed to any weakening of labour standards covering hours of work and overtime thresholds or reducing vacation entitlements and the number of statutory holidays.

On the subject of how union dues are spent 91.7 percent

of GSU survey respondents said it was the business of union members to decide not government.

When it came to the question of opting out of paying union dues in a unionized workplace 4.9 percent of survey respondents replied that opting out should be permitted while 84.0 percent were opposed to the idea and 11.2 percent were not sure.

63.1 percent of survey respondents said it should be made easier to form or join unions while 4.9 percent said it should be made more difficult and 32 percent said they were unsure.

When the government of Saskatchewan tables its legislation for debate let us know what you think and be sure to let members of the legislature know your views, too.





# Seasonal layoff? Don't wait to apply for EI benefits

A number of employees have received layoff notices in the last few weeks.

## **GSU members working for Viterra**

Mark Crawford at the Unemployed Workers Help Centre in Regina advises employees to apply for EI benefits as soon as possible after layoff. Viterra files their employee's Record of Employment electronically. You do not receive a copy. Waiting to file your claim can result in delays and missed weeks of coverage.

## **GSU members working for other employers**

GSU members who do not work for Viterra and whose employer files paper Records of Employment should wait until they receive their ROE before they apply, unless it takes more than two weeks to receive it. If you have waited two weeks for your ROE and it has not arrived, apply for EI and let them know you have not received the ROE.

## **Do you have any questions about your layoff or EI?**

If you have any questions about your layoff or EI, call your staff rep. We will do our best to help

guide you through the process.

There is no charge for assistance you receive from GSU beyond your regular union dues. All calls to GSU are confidential.

## **Need more help with your EI insurance? Contact the Unemployed Workers Help Centre**

If you are having problems with your EI claim you can also contact the Unemployed Workers Centre. They will help you by:

- advising you of your rights and obligations
- mediating between you and the Employment Insurance Commission
- helping to prepare and present your EI appeal.

The Unemployed Workers Help Centre is a non-profit organization providing information and advocacy services on Employment Insurance. This service is open to everyone in need and no fees are charged for any service. Funding is provided by grants from the government of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan trade unions.

Learn more at: [www.unemployedworkerscentre.org](http://www.unemployedworkerscentre.org)



### **• Regina Help Centre**

1888 Angus Street, Regina  
Phone 306.525.5138  
email: [m.crawford@sasktel.net](mailto:m.crawford@sasktel.net)

### **• Saskatoon Help Centre**

2154 Airport Drive, Saskatoon  
Phone 306.382.8662  
email [e.keser@sasktel.net](mailto:e.keser@sasktel.net)

## GSU members, officers gather to attend 57th annual SFL convention

Twenty-two GSU delegates attended the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour convention Oct. 31 to Nov. 3 in Regina.

Delegates participated in the usual business of a candle lighting ceremony recognizing workers killed on the job, resolutions to convention, and reports of various SFL committees. They also listened intently to a wide variety of presenters and guest speakers including Howard Willems of the Sask Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization; Hon. Don Morgan, Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety; and Lana Payne, president of the Newfoundland Federation of Labour.

GSU affiliate and International Longshore and Warehouse Union



*(L-r) Local 8 member Torey Agarand and ILWU officer Robert Ashton stopped by GSU's Regina office when they were in Regina for the SFL convention.*

(ILWU • Canada) vice-president Robert Ashton made his first visit to the prairies to attend the SFL convention. GSU vice-president Jim Brown reported that Ashton very much enjoyed the hospitable GSU delegation.

Throughout the convention Brown brought GSU members to the Regina office for a brief tour.

"The expectation of members was the office was in a big box building and that they would be walking into a boardroom setting instead of a character home in a nice neighbourhood," Brown noted. "But they all said the same thing when we headed back to convention—the office was a welcoming and friendly place."

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

**Opponents of unions say unions defend lazy workers and protect slackers who don't do their jobs from being fired.**

No union contract requires an employer to keep a worker who is lazy, incompetent or constantly absent or late.

Just as lawyers are obliged to provide fair representation to their client, unions are obliged by law to provide fair representation to every employee in the union's bargaining units.

Just as judges are obliged to uphold the law; arbitrators - the equivalent of judges in labour

arbitrations - are obliged to uphold the terms of the collective agreement.

In courts of law defendants sometimes get off on a technicality when the prosecution fails to follow due process.

In union arbitrations, due process is also very important, and it is essential that employer's follow the procedures outlined in the collective agreement when disciplining or terminating workers.

Collective agreements bargained by unions and employers are the equivalent of laws in a unionized workplace. Collective agreements outline the

agreed-upon steps for responding to many situations, including workplace discipline and employment termination.

If an employee steps out of line and the employer reacts, in a unionized workplace the affected worker has the right to submit a grievance and the union is legally obliged to represent and process the grievance.

Generally speaking, unions do not hire the workers of an employer. What unions do is make sure dismissals are for 'just cause' and that the proper disciplinary and termination procedures in the collective agreement have been followed.

Workers who are unionized have the right to protection from unjust dismissal, to arbitration and to reinstatement to employment when an arbitrator rules in their favour. These are rights that do not exist for workers in a non-union workplace.

Workers who are unionized have a contractual right to fair treatment at work regardless of gender, race, disability or sexual orientation or other prohibited grounds of discrimination. In this way, and many more, unions protect people's jobs.



Do you have a question, comment, or situation you would like GSU to address? Send it to *GSU News* at the Regina office.

## Collective bargaining talks continue in four GSU locals

GSU bargaining committees have been very busy this autumn. Progress continues to be made in each of the four GSU locals who are actively bargaining with their management counterparts.

Viterra (Local 1 - Operations and Maintenance and Local 2 - Regina Head Office) met

Nov. 14 and 15 in Regina. They are scheduled to meet again Dec. 13 and 14.

The GSU Local 7 (Heartland) bargaining committee's next meeting is Nov. 27 in Regina.

The Local 9 (HiPro Feed Mill) bargaining committee met with management on Nov. 15 and 16 in

Chilliwack. They will continue bargaining their first collective agreement when they meet again Dec. 17 and 18.

**The most recent bargaining updates are always available on GSU's web page— [www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca) — under the Member Services/ Bargaining tabs.**

# Court of Appeal hears appeal of vacation pay arbitration decision

On October 30, 2012, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal heard Viterra's application to overturn the arbitration award and the Court of Queen's Bench decisions upholding GSU's grievances challenging the company's decision to change how it administers and pays vacation pay on overtime pay. The appellate court heard arguments of law from GSU's lawyer, Ronni Nordal, and legal counsel for the company.

"What is at stake are two important principles," said GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner. "The first principle is the consistent administration of a contract. The second principle is whether the agreed dispute resolution process in a contract (called binding arbitration) is actually final and binding."

"On the first principle, Viterra says it does not dispute that employees who earn three weeks' vacation or four or five or six weeks' vacation, as the case

**"7.2 The decision of the Board or a majority of the arbitrators shall be final and binding upon the parties hereto and upon any employee or employees concerned. If there is no decision by a majority of the Board, then the decision of the Chairperson shall be similarly final and binding."**

~ Article 7 – Arbitration Board  
Operations & Maintenance collective agreement

may be, under the collective agreement with GSU should be paid their regular wage/salary when they take their earned vacation. Nor does Viterra dispute that vacation pay is payable on overtime," Wagner said.

"Despite the company's administrative practices, which were in place for many years under the collective agreements covering Country Operations, Maintenance and Regina Head Office employees, Viterra now argues that when calculating vacation pay on overtime worked by employees the company can resort to a minimum labour standard,

without notice or bargaining, instead of the contractual vacation rate it agreed to in its two collective agreements with GSU."

"The second principle of this case is whether collective agreements which provide for binding arbitration of disputes actually mean what they say," Wagner said. "GSU won fair and square in arbitration, but Viterra went to court to overturn an arbitration decision it didn't like."

At the end of the hearing the three judge Court of Appeal panel reserved their decision. When their ruling is released GSU will report.



## Would you wear this t-shirt?

We want your ideas for a new line of GSU t-shirts and other promotional items.

What promotional items should GSU have? What would you like to see on a GSU t-shirt? Send us your ideas. If we use your idea for a new promotional item we will send you a complimentary copy of the item you inspired so you can brag to your friends and family about being a fashion designer.

Watch the GSU web page where we will post samples items for you to vote on.

## Ridonkulous Street Slang **urban** DICTIONARY

### coffeedence

The sudden burst of confidence, focus, or creativity one experiences during or immediately following the consumption of coffee/caffeine.

"Wow! I've never seen Bob give such a good presentation."

"He had a double shot of espresso this morning -- must be coffeedence."

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