



GSU News

Everyone does better when EVERYONE does better Issue 5 - 2013

GSU stands up for fairness.

Our elected bargaining committees negotiate collective agreements with their employers which lay out a set of rules both sides agree to abide by. That gives employees and employers a game plan of how to succeed and how to compete fairly.

If you would like assistance interpreting your collective agreement and how it applies to you, let us know.



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GSU's Joint Executive Council meets, prepares for 2014 convention

GSU's Joint Executive Council (JEC) held its semi-annual meeting in Regina on Nov. 29.

The business of the JEC meeting included updates on current bargaining by GSU and amendments to GSU's constitution required as a result of Viterro divestitures to Richardson Pioneer, Agrium/CPS and Federated Co-operatives Ltd.

In addition, the JEC received reports on GSU's income, expenses, the GSU Defense Fund, numerous grievance arbitrations pending and legal expenses.

Council members also reviewed plans for GSU's tenth policy convention which will be held March 20 to 22, 2014. Council members committed to working to ensure a full contingent of delegates attend the convention.

The policy convention is the overall governing body of GSU. Delegates to the convention make important financial decisions and set the direction for the union. Elections of GSU's president, vice presidents (2), general secretary, and Defense Fund directors take place at this gathering of union members, officers, and staff.

The 2014 convention will once again be convened in the Cedar Park Lodge near Dundurn SK. The rustic accommodations of the lodge lend to the informal setting of convention and the remote location provides convention

delegates an opportunity to socialize and get to know one another.

In addition to reviewing the audited financial statements, reviewing resolutions, and tending the required business of the union, the GSU convention will offer an educational component and opportunities to review concerns and observations of members.

"Convention provides a well-rounded look at exactly how the union operates—presenting delegates with a unique blend of insight, education, socialization, and an opportunity to participate in setting the policies which shape the union," said GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner. "No other single GSU function has the ability to offer the same insight and impact that delegates to the convention are privy to."

GSU conventions have something to offer every GSU member. They are a great introduction for newcomers and they offer a vehicle for improvements and change for veteran union members.

Learn more about what's involved in attending a GSU convention.

Contact your elected officers or your GSU staff rep for more information if you are interested in being a delegate.

The inside scoop

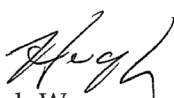
Sometimes it seems the only thing we can truly count on is change. The last year certainly presented a number of changes and challenges for GSU's members, officers and staff.

2014 is already shaping up to be an interesting year as we adapt to the new employers GSU members work for and ensure the best interests of members are protected and served.

GSU members work hard for their families, their communities, and their employers. GSU will do its best to ensure that members are able to work safely and are treated fairly. We believe that a fair and stable work life contributes to healthier families and communities.

What we have for ourselves we want for all others. By improving the working lives of GSU members we will continue to raise the bar for workers who have not yet had the opportunities that come with union membership.

It has been my pleasure to work with you and for you in 2013. I wish you all the best for 2014.



Hugh Wagner
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

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Upcoming events

March 20-22 GSU Biennial Policy Convention
Cedar Lodge (Near Dundurn).

Are you interested in becoming a GSU officer? Would you like to become a Defense Fund director and oversee the administration of GSU's Defense Fund?

Contact your elected officers or a GSU staff rep to learn more about what is involved.

Are you interested in attending the GSU convention March 20-22, 2014?

Each GSU local is entitled to send delegates to convention. Costs associated with attending the convention are covered by GSU (including wage loss).

Would you like to know more?

Call your GSU staff rep toll-free in Regina
1.866.522.6686 or send an email to
gsu.regina@sasktel.net.

Information on these events and other upcoming events is posted on GSU web page: www.gsu.ca.

GSU urges workers to participate in grain dust study

GSU staff rep Lawrence Maier is on a Federal Government committee examining the regulations in the Canada Labour Code regarding safe levels of exposure to grain dust. GSU has been in the forefront of the fight to protect workers from the damaging effects of dust on elevator workers since the early 1970s.

The committee is made up of industry representatives such as the Western Grain Elevators Association (WGEA), the B.C. Maritime Employers Association, and other management groups, and workers, represented by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), with representatives from CUPE, UFCW, GSU and others. The meetings are led by Labour Canada, with help from government scientists, and health and safety professionals.

Both the union representatives and government specialists agree the level of grain dust exposure is too high, and want the current standard of 10 milligrams of dust per cubic meter (10 mg/M3) of air averaged over an 8-hour day reduced to 4 milligrams.

There is overwhelming scientific research to back the reduction, and even the WGEA claim they meet the 4 mg/m3 limit we are demanding.

The union representatives requested that Labour Canada recommend the Government adopt the new lower dust level. Management representatives suggested a study be set up and conducted to do more research. Both the unions and the government scientists objected to a study as unnecessary and a needless delay.

In spite of our objections, the WGEA lobbied the government to delay the process and conduct a study, and the bureaucrats agreed without consulting the union members on the committee.

In November the committee met and discussed the upcoming research study. A sub-committee was set up, with CLC representative

Andrea Paert and Lawrence Maier representing workers. The study will be designed by an independent third party who will do the necessary testing and report back.

We urge grain elevator and terminal workers to send us their information and to get involved in this study.

You may be asked to participate in gathering information regarding dust levels at your workplace, or filling out health reports about how the dust conditions affect you. Please participate.

Let's make sure we impress on everyone involved that dust is a hazard, it does affect the health of workers, it is dangerous to our wellbeing and our future ability to live in wellness and comfort.

If you have any examples of how grain dust has affected you or someone you know—or if you are asked to participate in a study—contact Lawrence Maier at the GSU Regina office.

If you have pictures or other evidence of workers being subjected to too much dust, please send them, too.

The workers on the committee need to show that the situation in the workplace is not as dust-free as some claim it is. You can help by sharing your experiences and what you know.



Vacation Pay on Overtime Pay – Arbitrator Issues Final Award

In what seems to be the last chapter in the arbitration process with regard to GSU's 2009 grievances on calculation and payment of vacation pay on overtime paid to Viterra country operations/maintenance and Regina head office employees, on Dec. 20 Arbitrator William Hood, Q.C. issued his supplementary and final award.

At issue was which employees in the Saskatchewan country operations and maintenance employees' bargaining unit are eligible to receive retroactive adjustment of vacation pay on their overtime pay as called for by GSU's July 2009 grievances and as upheld by the board of arbitration, the Court of Queen's Bench and the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal.

GSU's position was clear from the outset as it argued that all employees in the country operations/maintenance and Regina head office bargaining

units are owed vacation pay on their overtime pay calculated at their vacation accrual rate from July 2009 or when they became employees in either of the bargaining units until the current collective agreements were ratified in January 2013.

Despite its position, when it first argued against the original arbitration award at the Court of Queen's, Viterra has since argued that former Agricore United employees in Saskatchewan (who entered GSU's bargaining units in March 2009 before the change in calculating vacation pay on overtime pay was made) and former AgPro Grain employees at the Moose Jaw and Saskatoon terminal elevators (who entered GSU's country operations/maintenance bargaining unit on Oct. 1, 2012) are not entitled to benefit from the arbitration award.

The two opposing arguments were presented to Arbitrator Hood on Nov. 20 and on Dec. 20 he issued a supplementary

award finding that former AU employees and former AgPro Grain employees are not entitled to retroactive adjustment of vacation pay on overtime paid since they were not originally covered by the practice that was upheld in the case of so called heritage Saskatchewan Wheat Pool employees.

"I am disappointed at the outcome with respect to former AU and AgPro Grain employees, but this seems to be the end of the road," said GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner. "Nonetheless the value of union representation for employees seeking to uphold longstanding practices affecting their pay has been proven again."

"Were it not for the quick action of a GSU member and the grievance actions commenced by the union everyone would have had their vacation pay on overtime paid reduced from the SWP standard to the significantly lower AU standard," Wagner said.

Canadian workers are struggling to afford retirement

Retirement security is one of the most pressing economic challenges facing Canadian families today. Less than 40 percent of all employees are covered by a workplace pension plan. Millions of Canadians simply can't save enough on their own to retire. Even bank economists have started to say RRSPs have failed.

There's too much risk and not enough security to ensure that, after a lifetime of work, people can retire and live out their last years in dignity.

We need to do something about retirement income.

Canada is facing a pension crisis. Expanding the Canada

Pension Plan/Quebec Pension Plan – everyone's pension plan – will make sure that all workers in Canada can count on a decent pension in retirement.

The CPP is financed exclusively by workers and their employers—not by taxes—and is run independent of the government. This means seniors in the future won't have to depend on government tax revenues or their company's stability to pay for their pension. In addition, the CPP's management costs are vastly lower than those charged by the banking and mutual fund industries.

Expanding the CPP would mean Canadians would have safer pensions. Expanding the CPP is about preparing for our future, and leaving behind a better system for our kids.

Join thousands of Canadians who are telling their Members of Parliament to increase pension benefits under the Canada Pension Plan and implement a fully funded plan to phase in doubling of benefits without delay.

Visit GSU's web page to learn what you can do to ensure retirement security for everyone and to sign the CLC's petition to expand CPP.

Source: www.canadianlabour.ca

Community Connections program gives back to communities

Grain and General Services Union members are committed to bettering their communities. Through our Community Connection program GSU members choose a community organization, cause, or even a community member as the recipient of a \$50 donation.

Through this program our members demonstrate the positive influence of unions in the workplace, raise awareness of GSU in the community, and give back to strengthen the communities where they work and live.



Josh Kovach presents Sub-Local 1.5 (Viterra - Humboldt & District)'s cheque to Rachel Trann and Partners Family Services. Sub-Local 1.5 members voted to donate their \$50 Community Connection donation and their \$300 member dues rebate to the Humboldt Soup Kitchen.



Brett North presented Sub-Local 1.3 (Viterra-Moose Jaw & area)'s \$50 Community Connection cheque to Moose Jaw Humane Society's Dana Haubaas and a furry humane society resident.

2013 Community Connection recipients

Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Lloydminster - Sub-Local 1.22

Unity Facilities Project, Unity - Sub-Local 1.21

ALS Society - Local 5, Wesern Producer

4H, Tisdale - S/L 1.21

Kindersley Sarcan, Kindersley - Local 14

Lucky Lake Food Bank, Lucky Lake - Local 6

Red Cross, Saskatoon - Local 11

Rosetown Hospital Fund, Rosetown - S/L 1.15

Saskatoon District Labour Council, Summer Snack program - S/L 1.2

*Jane Doe, Melfort - S/L 1.19

Southwest Integrated Health Facility, Maple Creek -Local 14

Moose Jaw Humane Society, Moose Jaw - S/L 1.3

Royal Canadian Legion, Grenfell - S/L 15.8

Raymore Story House - S/L 1.10

Regina Bantam Hockey Tier 3 Sabres – Local 2

Town of Carievale Rink Fund - S/L 1.12

Partners Family Services, Humboldt - S/L 1.5

Kindersley Family Resource Centre, Kindersley - Local 14

Lucky Lake Food Bank, Lucky Lake - Local 6

North Central Health, Melfort Hospital - S/L 1.19

Rosetown Hospital Fund - S/L 1.15

Rosthern Lions Hospital - S/L 1.18

Saskatoon Food Bank - Local 8.2 AEA - Saskatoon & Local 11 - PrintWest

Philipine Relief Fund - S/L 1.2

Kidsport, Carrot River - Local 14

New Market Place "Sensory Place", Carrot River - S/L 1.13

SK Wildlife Federation, Yorkton - Local 4

** names of community members have been changed to respect privacy*

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

“Why don’t we hear more details about grievance settlements?”

GSU does good things. We negotiate severance packages, advocate on behalf of our members in disputes up to and including grievance arbitration, but we won’t necessarily be shouting our victories from the highest rooftops.

There is a high level of confidentiality surrounding settlements for individual grievors. The grievor may not want anyone to know they have filed a grievance and the company may not want to make public what was involved in settling the grievance.

CONFIDENTIAL

We will share information about the results of executive grievances which effect groups of members (such as the vacation pay settlement on page 4), but you will seldom hear about resolution to individual grievors’ cases.

GSU respects the privacy of members and all inquiries and settlements are treated with the

strictest confidentiality unless disclosure is approved by the affected member.

Do you have a question, comment, or situation you would like GSU to address here? Send your suggestions to *GSU News*.

GSU members grateful for unforgettable Grey Cup experience



GSU members Parry Williams (above) and Melcolm McCormick each won two tickets to the 2013 Grey Cup in Riderville.

When the 2013 CFL season started, we could never have imagined GSU’s season tickets would turn into an opportunity for GSU members to witness a part of Rider history.

“GSU has season tickets we use to promote the union and its activities,” said GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner. “The ability to give away tickets to Rider home games helps us to draw extra attention to membership meetings, our web page, and union events.”

As season ticket owners, GSU had the opportunity to purchase Grey Cup tickets. Many GSU members made a point of trying to win GSU’s Grey Cup tickets by entering their names at meetings, on the web page, and through a variety of other opportunities.

GSU delegates to the October 2013 convention of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour gathered Oct. 31 drew the names of Parry Williams and Melcolm McCormick as winners of two tickets each to the big game.

“It was the best prize I have ever won,” Melcolm told GSU in an email to the office. “Being at that game was unreal. My son and I went the game. We will remember that for the rest of our lives.”

Parry took his wife to the game. “We both really enjoyed ourselves and couldn’t have asked for a better outcome,” Parry said. “Thank you for the tickets. It was a great memory maker.”

Do you have suggestions that GSU could use to raise awareness and participation? Let us know.

GSU local updates and events

GSU members vote to continue Defense Fund dues

With a few Local meetings yet to be held, it appears that the additional union dues being paid into the GSU Defense Fund will continue for another year. A tally of the votes cast to date shows 82 percent of voting members voted to continue the additional dues for 2014.

Since 1996 an annual members' vote has been conducted on whether to continue or discontinue the

additional defense fund dues. The additional dues are 1 percent of employees' regular straight time pay to a maximum of \$10 per employee per month. According to the most recent investment reports the GSU Defense Fund has assets of slightly more than \$3 million based on market values. Of the total amount a little more than \$2.7 million is invested with RBC Dominion Securities.

The GSU Defense Fund is administered by a five person board of directors who are members of the union and do not sit on GSU's Joint Executive Council. Directors are elected for two-year terms by delegates to GSU policy conventions.

Are you interested in becoming a GSU Defense Fund director? Contact the GSU office for more information.

Bargaining underway in Local 8.101 (Advance - Regina)

Agreement renewal bargaining between Local 8.101 and Advance Engineered Products resumed on Dec. 3. A number of issues were clarified and agreement was reached on a few collective agreement language matters.

In addition, the employer committee presented an opening wage increase

offer of 1 percent, 2 percent and 3 percent over the term of a proposed three year agreement. The Local 8.101 bargaining committee has not replied on wage increases as significant issues remain unresolved, including the impact of performance evaluations on employees' wage rates and

the continuation of attendance credits.

Members who attended the Local annual meeting on Dec. 6 were provided a full report on bargaining by President Doug Murray followed by a question and answer period and a thorough discussion.

Bargaining will resume in the New Year on Jan. 13 and 14.

Bargaining report, election, and prizes at the Local 5 (Western Producer) AGM

Local 5 held their annual general membership meeting on Dec. 10.

Local president Michelle Houlden reports that they had a great turnout, prizes were given away, and members dedicated their Community

Connection funding to the ALS Society.

Houlden also presented a bargaining update and at the request of the members she later distributed the report to all inscope staff—including those who were unable to

attend the meeting.

Elections saw some new faces and the return of some experienced officers to the 2014 executive committee. Welcome back to president Michelle Houlden and vice-president Kim Quintin.

Local 9 (Hi-Pro Feeds - Chilliwack)

GSU is challenging a management decision to deduct vacation pay from sick leave. We are continuing to pursue overtime for those employees who were denied

overtime when the company unilaterally changed the shift schedule. We recently won a Worksafe appeal where an employee was denied Workers Compensation.

The appeal was successful, and the employee will be reinstated onto benefits retroactive to the date of denial, and continuing forward.

Congratulations Tyler Gifford - SATCC's 2012-2013 Outstanding New Journeyperson

GSU has incredible members, and occasionally we are reminded just how talented they are.

Tyler Gifford had finished his pre-employment millwright training at SIAST shortly before he was hired by Viterra in June 2009. Since then, Tyler completed his Level 3 and Level 4 millwright training and, as per GSU's collective agreement with Tyler's employer, Viterra helped Tyler out financially by reimbursing him upon successful completion of his studies.

Tyler didn't just complete his studies. He aced them.

In December 2012 Tyler successfully wrote his Millwright exam and achieved an 89 percent on the red seal/inter-provincial standard. Sask. Apprenticeship contacted Tyler to congratulate him and let him know that he had received

Tyler received his award at the Sask. Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission's apprenticeship awards ceremony on Oct. 4 in Regina.



the highest mark achieved by a millwright for the year throughout Saskatchewan.

On Oct. 4, 2013, Tyler attended the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission's apprenticeship awards ceremony in Regina where he accepted the 2012-2013 Outstanding New

Journeyperson - Industrial Mechanic (Millwright) award from the SATCC. Thirty-six other top journeypersons were also invited to attend and receive their awards.

Congratulations, Tyler.

Thank you to GSU member Greg Parker for bringing Tyler's achievement to our attention.



GSU officers and staff wish you and those you love health, happiness, success, and the very best 2014 has to offer.

Happy New Year!

Ridonkulous Street Slang

urban DICTIONARY

textretary

A person's sidekick who texts for the driver.

"Louie never drives and texts. He has his own textretary to send messages."

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.