

General Secretary's Report 2014

Thank you, GSU members, for the opportunity to report on the business of your union. I encourage you to ask any questions you have about your union's administration and to raise your suggestions for changes in how we go about serving you.

Now that the dust has settled on the Glencore/Viterra divestitures, GSU has 10 bargaining units and eight (or 10) bargaining tables replacing the previous two bargaining units and one bargaining table.

This is how the bargaining tables will likely stack up for GSU in 2015.

GSU's New Membership Structure

Structural changes to the base membership of GSU will present us with significant new challenges in meeting our representational and collective bargaining responsibilities in 2015 and beyond.

Prior to Glencore's divestitures of various Viterra operations, GSU had two locals, two bargaining units and one bargaining table with Viterra. Local 1 comprised union members working in Saskatchewan-based Country Operations and Maintenance, and Local 2 comprised members working in Viterra's Regina head office.



Bargaining Table #1: Viterra Country Operations and Maintenance (Local 1) and Viterra Regina Head Office (Local 2), comprising 450 members at 33 locations in Saskatchewan covered by the Canada Labour Code.

Bargaining Table #2: Richardson Pioneer Country Operations and Maintenance (Local 14) comprising 120 members at 10 locations in Saskatchewan covered by the Canada Labour Code.

Bargaining Table #3: Agrium/CPS Ag Retail, Research and Seed Plant Operations plus the remnants of an office operation in Regina (Local 15) comprising 515 members at 93 locations in Saskatchewan covered by the Saskatchewan Employment Act (SEA).

Bargaining Table #4: Prince Albert Cooperative Association (Local 16) comprising 10 GSU members at three locations covered by SEA.

Bargaining Table #5: Battlefords and District Cooperative Ltd (Local 17) comprising five GSU members at one location covered by SEA.

Bargaining Table #6: Lloydminster and District Cooperative Association (Local 18) comprising four GSU members at one location covered by SEA.

Bargaining Table #7: Prairie Cooperative Ltd (Local 19) comprising seven GSU Members at one location covered by SEA.

Bargaining Table #8: CHS Rolling Mills (Local 20) comprising three GSU members at one location covered by SEA.

Notice to bargain under the Canada Labour Code (section 49. (1) of Division IV of Part I) may be given, "... within the period of four months immediately preceding the date of expiration of the term of the collective agreement..."

Notice to bargain under the Saskatchewan Employment Act (section 6-26 (2) of Division 6 of Part VI Labour Relations) "... must be given not less than 60 days nor more than 120 days before the expiry date of the collective agreement."

what do unions do?

Together FAIRNESS WORKS

When workers get together and stand up for fairness, they get results. Together, working people have won decent wages, safer workplaces, fair treatment and benefits like paid vacation time, job training, and insurance coverage for things like glasses, dental care, and medicine that keep them healthy and productive.

They didn't stop there. What they got at work, they got for everybody else by standing together and demanding more from the people they elected to boards, councils and legislatures. That's how we all got some of the things most of us take for granted today – minimum wages, statutory holidays, paid vacation time, public health insurance, public pensions, weekends, etc.

Together, **working people built Canada's middle class and created a country with fairness** as one of its fundamental values.

Source: <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/action-center/together-fairness-works>

Meeting the Challenge

Each of the above GSU bargaining units will commence collective agreement renewal bargaining in the fall of 2015 from a common platform, which is the collective agreement agreed to by GSU and Viterra in December, 2012.

Although starting from the same platform, each of the bargaining units will face their own unique challenges in preserving and improving on their current benefits, wages and working conditions.

We cannot predict with absolute certainty what each of the employers will propose for changes to the collective agreements covering employees who are represented by GSU. However, we can anticipate that each of the employers (particularly those who are new to bargaining with GSU) will seek to put their own stamp on the collective agreement and meld it with their existing operations.

GSU is already responding to employers' efforts to re-write important collective agreement provisions relating to paid sick leave and notices of job elimination. Several grievance actions have been commenced to protect union members' rights and we are confident the grievances will be successful.

Agreement renewal bargaining in 2015 could very well involve resisting employer bargaining proposals for concessions in relation to wages and working conditions.

Paid sick leave provided in Article 8 of the current collective agreements, supplementary employment insurance benefits provided in Article 14, hours of work and pay for overtime provided in Article 18 and/or job elimination notice including related employment insurance and severance pay benefits provided in Article 24 will all be important to defend as GSU bargains new collective agreements will all of the employers.

Undeterred by the potential challenges lying ahead, GSU commits to bargain hard to protect the benefits, wages and working conditions union members have established, and to improve on and/or change provisions in the collective agreements for the better.

EVERYBODY NEEDS A VACATION.

Being able to take time away from work for the other things that matter in life is important. It's part of a work-life balance that makes for a healthy and productive workforce—and better lives for everyone.

Should Canadians get more vacation time than the two to three weeks provided by labour standards today? We think so.

That's why **the labour movement negotiates for paid vacation time that grows over time**, and why the labour movement works to ensure everyone gets the time off they've earned.

Source: FAIRNESSWORKS.CA

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GSU's Commitments

GSU commits to providing each of the union's bargaining units with the resources and backup needed to get the job done; no matter how large or how small the unit.

While the members of each bargaining unit will set their own bargaining priorities, GSU commits to assisting members whenever and wherever they seek to put an end to so called "pay for performance salary programs".

These inaccurately-named salary programs are increasingly suspect models of management manipulation that deny members wage increases that take into account cost-of-living increases in addition to true recognition of employees' contribution to the business bottom line.

We believe everyone who works for a living should, at the very least, receive an annual wage increase that reflects increases to the cost of living.

As they have evolved in management hands, the pay-for-performance programs deprive employees of the ability to see their wages keep pace with inflation.

GSU also commits to defending good collective agreement protections around hours of work and overtime pay. Accurate recording of hours worked by employees and overtime pay are the best incentives for employers to staff operations adequately and to show respect for decent hours of work, balanced with the right to a personal and family life.

GSU will work with each bargaining unit to preserve and protect modern labour standards covering hours of work and pay for overtime.

On the subject of income protection for workers affected by corporate restructuring and/or takeovers, GSU has pioneered workplace adjustment provisions that provide paid notice of job elimination, relocation rights, supplementary employment insurance benefits and severance pay.

The income protections provided by GSU's collective agreements are much better than the meagre offerings

what do unions do?

THINK THAT WORKPLACE FATALITIES ARE A THING OF THE PAST?

The labour movement has given people the right to put their health and safety first when they go to work. Today, workers can demand to know whether the chemicals used in their workplaces are safe, and work knowing there's a way to get to safety in the event of an emergency. Workers are protected if they refuse work that is not safe and, thanks to Workers' Compensation, they don't need to hire a lawyer or buy insurance to recover wages lost due to a workplace injury.

But it's still a fact, according to Workers' Compensation reports, there were 977 work-related deaths in 2012—from work-related injuries, cancer, workplace violence or unsafe equipment. That same year there were 245,365 workplace injuries serious enough to make people stop working. That's why **the labour movement still lobbies hard for better laws to protect everyone.**

Source: FAIRNESS WORKS.CA

in federal or provincial labour legislation and/or private employment contracts.

In addition, the right to protection from unjust dismissal and unjust treatment at work are rights provided to unionized employees that simply do not exist for non-union employees. GSU will work with each Local to protect and improve on the pioneering work your union has accomplished.

Union Representation

Not every GSU Local will be at the bargaining table in 2015 and our work to administer bargained collective agreements continues to play a large role in the union's broader work plan.

The work of representing employees does not let up once a collective agreement is settled. In fact, the work multiplies.

There is perhaps no better example of this reality than in Local 8 (Advance Engineered Products – Regina and Saskatoon), where issues confronting elected officers and GSU staff seem to sprout every week.

This is a trying time for the sector Advance operates in. And yet it seems that some in management go out of their way to create issues instead of dialogue and cooperation.

A recent example is Advance management's decision to again announce the shutdown of the Saskatoon plant as the result of the failure of a joint venture that was greeted with optimism in May, 2014.

In spite of the clear requirements of the Saskatchewan Employment Act to give 90 days' notice of plant closure and to bargain a workplace adjustment plan with the union, Advance tried to escape its legal obligations by offering a severance offer, which was rejected.

Subsequently, GSU was compelled to file applications with the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board in an effort to force Advance to comply with the Act and to secure a fair shake for the 28 affected employees.

CANADA'S UNION ADVANTAGE FOR WOMEN AND YOUNG WORKERS

Women with unions earned \$6.89/hour more than women without a union at work. The wage gap* was \$109/week smaller for women with a union.

*the gap in the average weekly pay between women and men working the same hours, union vs. non-union.

Young workers (aged 15-24) earned \$3.16/hour more with a union at work. That added over \$48.2 million more each week to help start their lives and support their families.

Source: <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/about-clc/union-advantage-across-canada-provincial-breakdown>

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This type of struggle and intervention on behalf of union members is not unique to Advance. The same phenomenon is present at Viterra and CPS, for example. To the end of October 2014, GSU has spent more than \$130,000 on arbitrations, grievances and legal fees as the union carries out its duty to fairly represent employees. It is anticipated that this expense category will rise to more than \$150,000 by the end of the fiscal year.

Intervening on employees' behalf, advocating for employees' rights and pursuing a fair deal for everyone is a benefit to employees who are represented by a union. Non-union employees simply do not have representation and employment contract enforcement.

Neither do non-union employees have the right to protection from unjust dismissal and reinstatement to employment when they are wrongfully fired.

The clear benefit of a unionized employment relationship has been recognized by arbitrators and the Supreme Court of Canada in legal proceedings involving the calculation of damages when a worker has been dismissed without good or sufficient cause.

Arbitrators regularly top up damages with an additional 15 to 25 percent in recognition of the loss of a unionized job.

GSU commits to continue providing the high standard of representation and the protection of rights long associated with this union.

GSU Administration

GSU is in sound financial shape. Earlier in the year the \$75,000 loan made by the GSU Defense Fund to finance renovations to the union office in Regina was paid off.

In September, the Board of Directors of the GSU Defense Fund approved a new loan of \$100,000 to GSU operations for contingency purposes. This loan will be repaid with interest at the rate of six percent per year. Repayment commenced at the beginning of October.

At the end of September, the union's operations showed a surplus of \$20,589. The surplus would have been even

what do unions do?

WE STAND UP FOR FAMILIES.

Today, Canada's workforce is made up of both women and men. Gone are the days when one income was enough to raise a family.

The labour movement's demands that employers provide paid leave for new mothers resulted in the creation of "maternity leave benefits" from the federal government in 1971. Ten years later, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers went on strike to win additional weeks of paid maternity leave for their members.

Now, working parents can share 35 weeks of parental leave through the EI program. And as parental leave continues to evolve, **the labour movement continues to negotiate with employers and push governments to support working parents.**

Source: FAIRNESS WORKS.CA

larger but for the fact that 2014 is a GSU convention year and grievance/arbitration/legal expenses have already exceeded the 2014 operating budget estimate by \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Aside from agreement renewal bargaining between Local 7 and Heartland Livestock, GSU will not experience any other major bargaining expenses in 2014. That said, the heavy agreement renewal bargaining calendar in the latter part of 2015, together with the preparations for those bargaining tables, will draw significantly on union resources in the next fiscal year.

At its semi-annual meeting on Oct. 31, GSU's Joint Executive Council reviewed and adopted a draft action plan designed to support the union's 2015 agreement renewal bargaining agenda.

I am confident that continued careful management of GSU resources will see us through our challenges and we will continue to provide superior levels of service and representation to union members while continuing to be active contributors to the labour movement.

GSU Defense Fund

The most recent issue of *GSU News* reported that the GSU Defense Fund was nearing \$3.5 million in assets, based on market values. This number has slipped slightly to \$3.4 million as a result of recent stock market corrections. Nonetheless, the funds invested with RBC continue to show positive gains in the year to date.

Each year, GSU members attending annual meetings of their Locals or Sub-Locals have the opportunity to debate and vote on whether to continue paying additional dues into the GSU Defense Fund. This year is no different as the Executive Committee of the union is submitting the following resolution to be voted on at each annual membership meeting. The minutes of each meeting should record the number voting in favour and against the resolution.

"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, 2015, subject to review by members of the union at the 2015 annual Local and Sub-Local meetings."

SASKATCHEWAN'S UNION ADVANTAGE

There were 156,200 union members working everywhere in Saskatchewan in 2013 – about 35% of the province's workforce. Those workers earned, on average, \$4.99/hour more because their unions negotiated fair wages and work hours.

The fair wages and work hours that unions negotiated delivered nearly \$25.3 million more every week into the provincial economy through better paycheques for workers.

Source: www.canadianlabour.ca/about-clc/union-advantage-across-canada-provincial-breakdown

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A majority of 50 percent plus one of all the votes cast is required for the resolution to be carried or defeated.

The Political Economic Climate

In my 2013 report, I described a political economic climate that is increasingly hostile towards unions and civil society organizations. I can't say that things have improved a lot.

We know we have detractors and that there are interests intent on creating legislative barriers to union success and growth — or perhaps eliminating unions altogether.

Our job, as I see it, is not to bemoan the tough job we have ahead of us. Instead, we need to seize the bull by the horns and fearlessly promote the good that unions do; not just for union members, but in society generally.

The union advantage in wage rates alone is worth an additional \$4.99 per hour in Saskatchewan and \$5.17 across Canada. This is something to be proud of and to promote.

However, the union advantage is about much more than wage rates, and I've already spoken of a number of examples in this report about the better deal in store for a unionized worker compared to a non-unionized worker.

So, when we face our opponents and critics, let's do so with pride in what we've accomplished together and with the determination to accomplish more, not just for ourselves, but for the whole community. This is not a time to be apologetic or cautious. This is a time for leadership.

It is a pleasure to serve you.

In solidarity,



Hugh Wagner
General Secretary

Grain & General Services Union

GSU Elected Officers

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Vice-President Jim Brown
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