



# 2018 General Secretary's Report

I appreciate the opportunity to again report on the business of your union and I hope you have a thorough discussion about the direction of your union, including your suggestions for change.

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## GSU Bargaining in 2018

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As we begin a rather chilly autumn GSU is firing up its collective bargaining engines to commence agreement renewal bargaining with the following employers.

- Advance Tank Centres Ltd. And Advance Tank Production – Local 8
- Discovery Co-op – Local 17
- Lake Country Co-op – Local 16
- Lloydminster Co-op – Local 18
- Viterra – Locals 1 and 2
- Trouw Nutrition (formerly Hi-Pro Feeds) –Local 9
- Richardson International Ltd. – Local 14.

The contribution of members of each affected Local to assembling bargaining proposals is appreciated. As bargaining commences and proceeds, regular reports will be provided through GSU's Tuesday Members' Memo (TMM), direct reports and membership meetings.

Success at the bargaining table is directly linked to the involvement and support of members on the job. The best way to show your support for your bargaining committee is to keep up-to-date, share the information, talk it up in your workplace, and attend Local meetings when they are called.

A key bargaining component with a number of employers is the abolition or reform of so-called pay-for-performance plans. It seems abundantly clear that where these types of pay plans are in place, employees' advancement through the pay ranges is very

limited. With few exceptions it seems that the mid-point of a pay range is the new maximum for most employees.

Genuine movement towards the top of one's pay range coupled with transparent employer pay administration will be a central theme in the bargaining.

In my opinion, rates of pay are stagnating, and denying most employees a worthwhile pay increase is sapping morale.

Something has to change and the bargaining table is the place to make change.

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## Union Representation

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Administering collective agreements and assisting GSU members is a big part of your union staff's daily work. We try to report on issues identified and resolved as part of our regular reporting to GSU members through the TMM. If there are subjects we are overlooking and should be including in GSU's communications, please let us know.

Recently several grievances were successfully resolved and the cost of arbitration was avoided. In one case an employer who had been incorrectly deducting union dues for four years agreed to rectify the problem and compensate GSU.

A second case involved the accommodation of an employee with a medical condition and payment of disability benefits. This matter dragged on for far too long, but ultimately a good settlement and ongoing workplace accommodation was successfully negotiated with the employer.

Representing employees in pursuit of a fair deal for all is unique to the employment relationships of employees who are represented by a union. Non-union employees do not have the benefit of contractual rights and an organization to represent them, including the means to communicate results.

Neither do non-union employees have the right to protection from unjust dismissal and reinstatement to employment when they are wrongfully fired. This protection is a keystone of being unionized.

GSU is ready to bring union representation to groups of workers who are looking for proven representation in their workplaces. We need contacts and/or an introduction. That's where you

come into the picture. If you know someone who might be interested in being represented by GSU don't be shy. Please let us know.

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## GSU Administration

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We bid farewell to Dorothy Merk and Lawrence Maier in the first quarter of this year. Their retirements resulted in a shifting of administrative and representation assignments. With the hiring of Donna Driediger in January and the redistribution of administrative responsibilities the GSU office is slowly, but steadily adjusting to a smaller staff complement.

GSU's administration is shifting to new, easier to remember email addresses. In addition, a new data base is being built that will help streamline administration and communications, including diarizing important events such as grievance deadlines. The union administration has also moved to the top two floors of the office building in Regina and the ground floor is being rented to the Nordal LeBlanc law firm.

We thank members and officers for their understanding during the transition. When things are complete we will have streamlined administrative processes and hopefully greater capacity for service to members.

In 2019 an evaluation of resources will be undertaken and a determination will be made on whether to increase GSU staff or stay with the present staffing levels for the foreseeable future.

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## GSU Defense Fund

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At the end of the second quarter of 2018 the assets of the GSU Defense Fund stood at \$4.3 million; a \$200 thousand improvement from autumn 2017. That being said, we expect ups and downs in the value of the fund as the financial markets fluctuate.

As GSU enters agreement renewal bargaining with seven employers, union members can be confident that they have the resources to take on a collective bargaining fight if the need arises.

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, and GSU's executive committee is submitting the following resolution to be voted on at each annual membership meeting. The number voting in favour and against the resolution should be recorded and transmitted to GSU's general secretary.

*“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, 2019, subject to review by members of the union at the 2019 annual Local and Sub-Local meetings.”*

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

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## GSU 2018 Policy Convention - March 22 to 24, 2018

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GSU held another successful biennial policy convention from March 22 to 24 inclusive at the Bella Vista Inn in Humboldt.

The convention was attended by an unprecedented number of new and youthful delegates which is a positive sign for the future of GSU. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that unions in every sector and every part of Canada face significant pressure from employers, governments, technology and a fluctuating economy.

GSU is not immune from the constantly changing environment and we must constantly strive to reinvent the union in order to be relevant to new generations of workers and effective in responding to evolving political/economic challenges.


As with every policy convention, the 2018 convention gave every delegate the opportunity to represent the members of their Local in setting the policy direction of GSU, including electing the president, vice presidents and general secretary.

I urge every member and elected officer of GSU to seize the day and help lead the way to a rewarding future for every member of the union.

In my opinion, it is our responsibility to fearlessly promote the good that GSU and other unions do; not just for union members, but also for the broader community and society.

The clear benefit of being in a unionized has long been recognized by arbitrators and the Supreme Court of Canada, but the real challenge we face is convincing ourselves to embrace the union advantage. What we've accomplished together is remarkable, but we have much more to do. By supporting one another and standing up to our opponents we can move mountains. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Solidarity,



Hugh Wagner, General Secretary