



GSU News

Everyone does better when EVERYONE does better Issue 1 - 2013



Bill 85—The Saskatchewan Employment Act—has plenty of changes in store for Saskatchewan workers.

Legislation for unexpected changes to work schedules, the ability to average hours without paying overtime, and the ability for employers to apply to decertify unions are included in the proposed Act.

We need more time to review the Act and make sure Saskatchewan workers are protected. You can help.

Send the enclosed letter to the Premier and your MLA, and tell the Saskatchewan government to slow down and stop rushing Bill 85 through the legislative assembly.

Inside

Bill 85 and the latest threat to Saskatchewan workers 3

Job offers on the horizon, Richardson Pioneer 4

Exploring the benefits of collective agreements 5

GSU is offering five \$2,000 scholarships in 2013 6

We're bargaining settlements, not strikes

A heavy bargaining calendar drew on union resources and finances over the past year as GSU officers and staff worked on bargaining collective agreements.

Five GSU locals saw renewed collective agreements put in place for their members in 2012 and early 2013:

Ratified settlements:

- Local 1 (Viterra - Operations & Maintenance, SK),
- Local 2 (Viterra - Head Office),
- Local 6 (Wildwest Steelhead - Lucky Lake),
- Local 7 (Heartland Livestock),
- Sub-Local 8.101 (Advance Engineered Products - Regina).

Five other GSU locals will move through various steps in the bargaining process in 2013:

Currently negotiating:

- Local 4 (Grain Millers - Yorkton),
- Local 9 (Hi-Pro - Chilliwack).

Upcoming bargaining:

- Local 5 (Western Producer),
- Local 8.101 (Advance Engineered Products—Regina),
- Local 8.102 (Advance Engineered Products—Saskatoon).

Negotiating a collective agreement takes time and a lot of work. Membership meetings are held, proposals are gathered, bargaining committees are

elected, research is conducted, and arguments are developed. Union and management committees meet, exchange proposals, and—ideally—they work cooperatively toward a tentative settlement that benefits everyone.

Once a tentative settlement is reached it is taken back to union members and company boards who vote to accept or reject the settlement. If both sides accept the settlement, the settlement is “ratified” and it becomes a collective agreement.

The bargaining process doesn't stop when a new agreement is settled. Bargaining is an ongoing process in which members participate each time they stand up for their rights in their agreement or identify areas of the agreement which need to be changed.

“If members don't act on their rights - by claiming allowances and overtime pay, for instance - it is a signal to management that the agreement clause outlining that particular right isn't important and they might not be needed or defended,” said staff rep Lawrence Maier. “It becomes a use it or risk losing it situation.”

If you have questions about bargaining or negotiations in your local, contact your elected GSU officers or your staff rep.

Did you know ... Your collective agreement is available online.

Visit our web page at www.gsu.ca. Find your collective agreement under the Member Services | Collective Agreements tabs.

The inside scoop

Volunteer work and member participation play very important roles in building the strength of Grain and General Services Union.

GSU is a great organization due to the efforts of GSU officers and their work on behalf of the membership. There is no replacement for the insight, expertise, and front-line experience of GSU officers at our meetings, on our various boards and committees, or at the bargaining table when we negotiate with employers. Thank you to those of you who have taken on this important role.

When elected GSU officers are away from the workplace representing their peers, it is their co-workers who pitch in and fill the void. You make it possible for the co-workers you have elected as officers to leave their workplace and represent members at attend union functions. Your efforts are appreciated.

Volunteer work also extends to GSU members who take an active role in the union. Whether in person or electronically, your questions, observations and feedback – positive and negative – is critical because it is members who set the policy guidelines within which we work. We truly appreciate your emails and your phone messages, your compliments and your criticisms.

You strengthen your collective agreements every time you stand up for your rights and when you stand up for what is right. It can be difficult for anyone to question workplace processes or disagree with a superior and I hope your membership in GSU makes that process a little easier for you.



Hugh Wagner, GSU general secretary

Who is GSU?

GSU represents working people across Western Canada. We are headquartered in Regina with a second office in Saskatoon.

We represent a true cross section of the workforce. Our members work in elevators, offices, factories, barns, laboratories, and even lakes.

Join GSU!

If you know workers who may benefit from joining GSU let us know.



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 February 27, 2013.

Upcoming events

March 6-8 **GSU educational conference**
Ramada Convention Centre
Regina, SK
(See page 6 for details.)

June 9-13 **Prairie School for Union Women**
Waskesiu Lake, SK
Call GSU for information.

August 4-10 **SFL Summer Camp 2013**
Calling Lakes Centre
Fort Qu'Appelle, SK
Don't miss out! Register Early!

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

Bill 85 and the Saskatchewan Employment Act: the latest threat to workers in Saskatchewan

On Dec. 5 the government introduced the Saskatchewan Employment Act in the Legislative Assembly as Bill 85.

The proposed Act is a sweeping re-write of Saskatchewan's labour laws, including the Labour Standards Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, and the Trade Union Act. The draft Act reduces some 914 pages of current labour legislation into 184 pages, combining 12 separate labour laws into one.

"The government introduced Bill 85 with the stated objective of modernizing, streamlining and simplifying labour legislation," said GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner.

As a member of the committee which advises the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety about the government's proposed Saskatchewan Employment Act, Wagner has spent a considerable amount of time studying Bill 85 since it was introduced. In his opinion the proposed new Act does not seem to be modern, simplified or streamlined.

"My greatest concern is that the draft Act actually

weakens current labour standards legislation relied upon by GSU members and so many working people in our province," Wagner said. "And the draft Act has problematic changes to the laws governing labour relations and workplace health and safety."

According to Wagner, before Bill 85 was introduced there was a substantial measure of consensus in the Minister's advisory committee of business, community and labour representatives. Other than some suggestions for tweaking in some areas, the consensus in committee was that Saskatchewan's labour laws are functioning rather well, but if we are going to change the laws the time should be taken to get it right.

"In spite of the dialogue and consensus in the Minister's advisory committee, Bill 85 is a wholesale change to labour legislation in Saskatchewan," Wagner said. "If it is not substantially amended, Bill 85 will result in working conditions and labour relations rules that do not benefit wage earners or, ultimately, employers."



General Secretary Hugh Wagner fielded questions at a Feb. 20 Bill 85 news conference in Regina.

Union workers are heading for a major shake-up unless there are substantial changes in the proposed wording of the Act.

- Individual workers and supervisors will shoulder responsibility for workplace safety as they may be held personally responsible and fined for incidents.
- Supervisors will be barred from belonging to the same bargaining unit of employees that they supervise. What this will do to vacation and sick leave credits is unclear.
- Increased numbers of employees will be barred from belonging to a union and removed from the union they currently belong to without any valid reason for being excluded.

Take action now! Here's how:

Sign the enclosed letter and send it to the Premier and your MLA. Tell them to slow down and not to rush Bill 85 through the legislative assembly.

Visit www.gsu.ca to learn more.

Government of Saskatchewan confirms Hugh Wagner's re-appointment to Minister's Advisory Committee

GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner will continue his work on the committee which advises Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety.

The committee's focus will be the government's proposed Saskatchewan Employment Act (SEA) which was introduced in the Legislative Assembly as Bill 85.

Job offers on the horizon as Richardson Pioneer divestiture nears

As Viterra's plans to divest certain agro and grain handling operations to Richardson Pioneer get closer, it appears most of the affected GSU members will be receiving job offers from Richardson International representatives.

General Secretary Hugh Wagner has sent a letter to GSU's Local 1 (Viterra Operations & Maintenance, SK) members outlining important steps to take if they are approached with a job offer. Wagner also contacted Viterra management with a request for clarification on job offers and requested clarification of the circumstances surrounding the impending sale of operations as it pertains to employees. When Viterra management's reply is received it will be shared with Local 1 (Viterra - Operations & Maintenance, SK) members.

Wagner has since received a letter from Richardson

International confirming that job offers will be made and the terms of the transferred employees' collective agreement will be adhered to.

Under the successorship provisions of the Canada Labour Code GSU will continue to represent Local 1 members when they begin working for Richardson. GSU has yet to receive information from Viterra confirming the number of employees who will be transferred to with the operations being sold, but our initial estimate is that approximately 120 employees in country operations will be affected.



GSU will continue to press for useful information from the managements of Viterra and JRI to ensure the transfer and successor processes work as seamlessly as possible.

Are you and your co-workers ready for a reclass?

The recent Local 2 (Viterra - Head Office) bargaining settlement included provision for reclassification of a group of employees in Viterra's head office. While the specific job title and the job itself don't appear to have changed, management

asserted that many things have changed and a downward reclass was in order.

As a result some employees will be red-circled and other employees who are closer to the top of their new pay range will have a lower top rate.

GSU is currently assisting the affected employees who disagree with the downward reclassification. They believe their specific duties have changed enough over the years to warrant remaining in the former pay range. Working as a group, these individuals are receiving GSU's assistance as they sort through the process of challenging the reclassification of their positions.

- **Have your responsibilities increased over the years?**
- **Do you think a reclassification of your position may be in order?**
- **Do you know other workers who share your concerns?**

Have a look at your job description and compare it to the actual duties you perform. You may be in a position to request a reclassification.

If you have any questions or concerns, call your GSU staff rep. All inquiries, advice, and assistance are strictly confidential.



You said what?

questions, observations, and tips from GSU members

“I haven’t been a union member before. What is a collective agreement? And what are the benefits of having one?”

A collective agreement is a contract that describes the terms and conditions of employment for employees in their workplace, the rights of employees, and the obligations of the employer. Collective agreements protect employees.

Your collective agreement is the result of collective bargaining between your elected GSU representatives and your employer, as approved by members’ votes. The terms of the collective agreement are legally binding on the union and your employer, and they are enforceable under law.

Answers to many employment-related questions can be found in your collective agreement.

Salary and benefits are among the most obvious and important matters described in a collective agreement.

Collective agreements usually include clauses on working conditions such as hours of work and overtime, leave of absence provisions, seniority, transfers, resignation, termination, protection against arbitrary disciplinary action, access to your personnel file, and much more.

The GSU’s goal is to expand on and improve its collective agreements for members.

Collective bargaining provides a way to do collectively what you can’t do on your own. It’s about GSU members working together for better workplace conditions.

As a GSU member with an interest in the outcome of collective bargaining, we hope you will become more familiar with your collective agreement and get involved in the collective bargaining process to strengthen your collective agreement.

Contact your GSU staff rep with any questions you have about your collective agreement.

We work hard to enforce the rights and benefits in your agreement. If you are having a problem in the workplace and you think your collective agreement rights may have been violated, don’t hesitate to contact an elected GSU officer or a GSU staff rep. We will work with you to find answers to your questions, recommend what course of action is best to follow. We will not contact your employer or act on your behalf without consultation, direction, and approval from you.

These services are provided to you as part of your union dues and there is no additional charge for assisting you.

Visit www.gsu.ca to view or download a copy of your collective agreement.

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





2013 Scholarship Program

Grain and General Services Union is offering five \$2,000 scholarships to members, their dependants, and their spouses in 2013

GSU's scholarship committee is putting the final touches on our 2013 scholarship program.

Updated forms for our 2013 scholarships will be available on our web page at www.gsu.ca by mid-March.

The deadline for receipt of 2013 scholarship applications is July 1.

The scholarship competition is open to GSU members, their spouses, and dependant children who have not previously won.

Scholarship applicants must be enrolled in a diploma, degree,

or certificate program at a community college, university, trade school, or technical institute as a full-time student in any country.

There are currently five \$2,000 scholarships available: three are dependant scholarships and two are GSU member scholarships.

Dependant scholarships are available for dependant children of GSU members. Applicants for dependant scholarships must be age 25 or younger.

GSU member scholarships are available for GSU members and

spouses of members. If there are no member scholarship applications all five scholarships will be available to be awarded to eligible dependant applicants.

GSU members must have a signed union card on file with the union to be eligible for GSU scholarships.

Contact your staff rep if you have any questions or concerns.

Visit www.gsu.ca for application forms and detailed information on our 2013 scholarship program.

Your workplace

A GSU education opportunity March 6 to 8, Regina, SK

Nearly 40 GSU members have registered to attend our educational conference in Regina.

The program content is suitable

for GSU members at all levels of involvement and experience.

Agenda items include:

- clear communication methods
- tips and practical methods for dealing with workplace problems
- the value of collective agreements
- tools for all GSU members, and much more.

"There are workplace options available to our members through their collective agreements that simply aren't available to non-union members," said Steve Torgerson, course facilitator. "Our goal is for conference participants to leave with a newfound sense of confidence in their ability to deal with workplace issues and to know that the union is always ready to provide assistance."



apathy

The utter lack of interest that ensues shortly after downloading numerous, mind-numbingly worthless apps for an iPhone or similar "smart phone" device.

"His apathy started shortly after downloading that light-saber for his iPhone."

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.