

# **DRAFT 2021/2022 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE JOINT EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (JEC) OF GRAIN AND GENERAL SERVICES UNION (ILWU CANADA) – Presented to and adopted by the Joint Executive Council at their Annual Meeting on March 25, 2022**

---

We welcome the opportunity to report to GSU members about the business of your union and we commit to working with you in pressing for better wages, better working conditions and a better quality of life for all union members.

We also wish to say that we stand with the people of Ukraine in their heroic stand against a brutal war being waged against them by a corrupt regime in Russia.

We do not know what the future will bring as peaceful relations between nations are being upended again by the military might of a big power. Nonetheless, we owe it to those who come after us to fight for peace, to fight against military aggression wherever it occurs and by whomever it is perpetrated.

## **GSU Administration and Finances**

The Dec. 31, 2021 audited financial statements included with this report show that GSU had an operating surplus of \$16,914 for 2021 fiscal year. Dues revenues for 2021 held steady while operating expenses were \$60,659 higher overall compared to 2021 as a result of the GSU policy convention held last March and the substantial expenditures on repairing and upgrading GSU's office building in Regina.

We project an operating deficit of \$131,000 for 2022 as reflected in the operating budget estimate adopted by our annual Joint Executive Council meeting on March 25, 2022. Among other items, the budget estimate includes higher expenses for administration since GSU hired an additional staff representative for an 18-month term as the union transitions to the departure of general secretary Hugh Wagner. GSU has enough cash saved from prior years to cover the estimated deficit.

GSU is in good financial shape as the Dec. 31, 2021 balance sheet shows. The union's net assets were \$6.1 million at the

## **Notes**

end of 2021; an improvement of \$500,000 compared to 2021. GSU's financial commitments are all current and there is no external debt other than the nearly liquidated demand loan from Local 2 (Viterro Head Office). GSU has a solid financial foundation.

GSU advertised to fill the vacancy left when staff rep Dale Markling retired at the end of July 2021. As a result of the recruitment process, GSU hired Brian Lark to fill the vacant staff rep position in Saskatoon and also hired Mason Van Luven into a term staff rep position in the Regina office.

Currently, GSU is also endeavouring to fill an accounting and payroll administrator position created by the departure of Debbie Head in the beginning of February. We thank Lynn Woods for stepping up to ensure the required financial accounting functions are met during the recruitment process.

Over the years GSU has adjusted and adapted to an ever-changing environment without sacrificing support and assistance to union members. We will continue to adapt to changing circumstances as we pursue GSU's mission to elevate the working lives of union members.

We thank Lynn Woods, Steve Torgerson, Donna Driediger, Brian Lark and Mason Van Luven for their enthusiasm and dedication to serving GSU members.

## **2022**

This will be a year of agreement renewal bargaining as Locals 8 (Advance Tank Production/Advance Tank Centres) and 14 (Richardson International) continue their efforts to bargain renewed collective agreements to replace their expired agreements.

As this report is being written, Local 8 has entered the mandatory conciliation process under the Saskatchewan Employment Act in order to resolve its bargaining impasse with Advance. A conciliation meeting on March 23 has not ended the impasse. Accordingly, on April 12 members of the Local will vote on whether to take strike action in support

of their bargaining demand for better wages. Strike action could commence as early as mid-April.

For their part, members of Local 14 are currently in the process of voting on a so called “best offer” from their employer, Richardson International. Once again, the primary issue is wage increases. Local 14 members are expected to complete their balloting the week of March 28.

If the employer’s offer is accepted by a majority of voting members a new Local 14 collective agreement will be concluded for a four-year term. If the employer’s March 9 offer is rejected by a majority of voters the management will be invited to return to bargaining. Failing a return to bargaining and/or a substantial change in Richardson’s position a notice of dispute will be filed and conciliation will begin as provided in Part I of the Canada Labour Code.

If Local 14 enters conciliation and the process does not result in a settlement, any strike action would be subject to approval by a majority of Local 14 members participating in a secret ballot vote.

Local 4 (Grain Millers), Local 5 (Western Producer) and Local 6 (Wild West Steelhead) join the bargaining fray in the first half of 2022. They will be followed by Locals 1 and 2 (Viterra), Local 16 (Discovery Co-op), Local 17 (Lake Country Co-op) and Local 18 (Lloydminster Co-op) this coming autumn.

The impact of the COVID19 pandemic, the recent easing of public health measures and rising price inflation point to very serious gaps in our political economic system. These contradictions are exacerbated by Russia’s war on Ukraine and the resulting fall out. Nonetheless, these chaotic times will not stop GSU from continuing to do its best to organize and deliver for union members.

Collective bargaining success flows directly from the involvement and support of union members. Staying on top of the issues and openly supporting their bargaining agenda is the best thing union members can do to move the process forward to a beneficial outcome.

The clash between two sets of interests at the bargaining table will test the resolve of affected members. GSU's leadership commits to supporting Locals who find themselves in a fight with their employer. We have the financial resources to do the job. We just have to match those resources with the courage to stand our ground.

The time for real increases to the wages of every member of the Canadian working class is long overdue. It is time to begin the hard work of tackling growing economic inequality in Canada. This means challenging the political and business elites to dig deep to improve working people's standards of living and community welfare in support of a more equitable society.

Our aim is to build on the platform built for us by our predecessors. Our mission is to set the stage for a better world for those who come after us. What we have for ourselves, we want for all others.

### **GSU Defense Fund**

At Dec. 31, 2021, the market value of GSU Defense Fund assets was \$5.7 million as our investment strategy of preserving capital while seeking steady positive returns continues to pay off. The Fund's investments are structured to ride out market volatility and this year has already shown considerable volatility as the market casino gyrates between euphoria and doom.

The GSU Defense Fund is administered by a Board of Directors elected by the delegates to biennial policy conventions of the union. Between conventions, vacancies on the board are filled by candidacies submitted to the Joint Executive Council (JEC).

In order to maintain an arm's length relationship between GSU's day-to-day operating finances and the Defense Fund, members serving as directors of the Fund cannot also sit on the union's JEC.

Currently Wilfred Harris (Local 1), Sharlene Lark (Local 5), Doug Kampman (Local 8) and Lynn Shaw (Local 15) make

up the board of directors. There is one vacancy to be filled on an interim basis and all five seats are up for election at the March 2023 GSU convention.

In addition to investment returns, the Fund continues to grow steadily through the additional dues of \$10 per member per month being paid into the Fund.

In autumn 2021 GSU members participating in annual local and sub-local meetings voted once again on a motion to continue the additional dues being paid into the GSU Defense Fund. And, once again the motion to continue the additional dues was approved by a 73.3 percent majority of those who voted.

The GSU Defense Fund is solid insurance for GSU members and a very important resource in assisting members with their collective bargaining agendas. For the first time in a long while GSU members are on the verge of drawing on the Fund as members of Local 8 (Advance) are entering the strike or lockout phase of the bargaining impasse with their employer. They may be followed by members of Local 14 and perhaps others as GSU's busy 2022 bargaining calendar unfolds.

Strike or lockout pay is set by the Board of Directors of the GSU Defense Fund and is not subject to income tax. Strike/lockout pay currently stands at 75 percent of members' regular wage/salary plus payment of benefits plan premiums provided they participate directly in the authorized action in a collective bargaining dispute involving their GSU Local.

### **Succession Planning and Transition**

Following debate at the 2021 policy convention, GSU's constitution was amended to end election of the general secretary in favour of a recruitment and hiring process. And, since Hugh Wagner has informed the JEC of his intention to step down following the 2023 GSU convention, the Executive Committee will commence the process of recruiting for the position.

In the latter part of the summer an advertisement of the job will be published and potential candidates will be invited to apply. Following Labour Day, the Executive Committee will begin interviewing with the objective of selecting a candidate by the final quarter of the year.

## **Union Education**

GSU provides in-house targeted workshop/seminar opportunities covering shop steward training and local leadership/representation as well as introductions to labour law and collective bargaining.

Our internal efforts have been hampered in the last two years by the pandemic. However, on February 24 we marked a new beginning as an online educational on the roles of a local officer and union steward was held for 11 participants. Planning is also underway for an in-person forum before the summer break followed by a further session in the fall.

In addition to internally designed and delivered union education, GSU sponsors up to three opportunities for elected members to attend the CLC/SFL Spring School and the Prairie School for Union Women. GSU will do more to expand and promote participation in those programs.

Although there are currently no staff vacancies, members interested in becoming a GSU staff representative should consider stepping up to be a local union delegate, or serve on a Local executive committee member or bargaining committee, or serve as a Local representative on the JEC. This experience is definitely an asset when GSU hiring committees are reviewing applications for union staff positions.

## **Organizing**

It's been quite some time since GSU has engaged in an organizing drive and it is time to get back to actively recruiting new members. Most importantly, rather than talking about organizing, we have to engage in active organizing. In order to get this kick-started GSU is planning to hold an organizing forum this fall in conjunction with the semi-annual meeting of the Joint Executive Council.

Employers are organized when it comes to labour issues and workers also need to be organized if we expect to overcome the obstacles to better standards of living and more equitable workplaces. It is time for action.

### **The ILWU Canada Family**

GSU's affiliation to ILWU Canada means we are part of a larger union family that includes Retail Wholesale Department Store Union (RWDSU) Saskatchewan, Retail Wholesale Union (BC) and Grain Workers Union Local 333. Together we constitute an organization of more than 16,000 progressive trade unionists who share a strong commitment to economic and social justice. We look forward to continuing our work with the ILWU Canada family to advance the welfare of the working class and our communities.

Solidarity,

ON BEHALF OF THE JOINT EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF  
GRAIN & GENERAL SERVICES UNION (ILWU•CANADA)

Hugh Wagner General Secretary

*[List of JEC members]*



**GSU toll-free:** 1.866.522.6686 (Regina)  
or 1.855.384.7314 (Saskatoon)

**Local calls:** in Regina phone 306.522.6686 or in Saskatoon phone 306.384.7314

**GSU email:** [gsu@gsu.ca](mailto:gsu@gsu.ca)

**GSU – Regina Office**

2334 McIntyre Street, Regina, SK Canada S4R 3S9  
Phone 306.522.6686 • Fax 306.565.3430

**GSU – Saskatoon office**

2154 Airport Drive, Saskatoon, SK Canada S7L 6M6  
Phone 306.384.7314 • Fax 306.384.1006

**GSU Executive Committee**

GSU PRESIDENT Jim Brown  
GSU VICE PRESIDENT Michelle Houlden  
GSU VICE PRESIDENT Sheila Tran