

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE GRAIN AND GENERAL SERVICES UNION (ILWU • CANADA) held virtually by Zoom and In Person at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel & Conference Centre, Regina, SK – September 24, 2021

GSU Executive Committee

Jim Brown

Michelle Houlden

Local 1 (Viterra Operations & Maintenance)

David Barrett

Travis Brewer

Matt Denomie

Glenn Outram

Local 2 (Viterra Head Office)

Sheila Tran

Howard Wilson

Local 4 (Grain Millers)

Ryan McNabb

Kevin Pickup

Local 5 (Western Producer)

Sharlene Lark

Local 6 (Wild West Steelhead)

Pasha Mughal

Local 8 (Advance Employees Association)

Dion Elliott

Steve Holliday

Local 9 (Trouw Nutrition)

Jordan Jefferson

Local 13 (IATSE Local 295), Local 16 (Lake Country Co-op), Local 17 (Discovery Co-op), Local 18 (Lloydminster Co-op), Local 19 (Prairie Co-op)

Ben Scott

GSU Staff

Steve Torgerson

Hugh Wagner

Lynn Woods

Yellow indicates in-person attendance.

These minutes reflect the disposition of the Convention. It should be noted that each agenda item and matters which arose, were thoroughly discussed and often vigorously debated. In the interest of brevity, however, in most instances the final result is the only aspect recorded.

Shortly before the meeting was called to order, staff representative Steve Torgerson greeted online participants. He reviewed the Zoom home screen and tech items for the meeting such as turning off video to help bandwidth, muting when not speaking, chat, raising your hand to speak, polling, and the process for voting.

CALL TO ORDER

General Secretary Hugh Wagner welcomed everyone to the meeting, advising that an online meeting was currently the safest and most effective method of gathering to maintain our democratic process.

Wagner thanked everyone for attending and Torgerson for his mastery in setting up the meeting. He added that while he would report in more detail on staff issues later in the meeting, GSU had been operating with three full-time people at the office, and he thanked Woods and Torgerson for their work during this period.

President Jim Brown echoed Wagner's appreciation to everyone who had joined the meeting and he welcomed them. Brown added it meant a lot to members in their workplaces to have peers volunteering to represent them and provide service as representatives of the union.

Brown encouraged everyone to share their comments and questions throughout the meeting, and to discuss agenda items thoroughly.

Wagner outlined the procedure for the meeting. On noncontentious issues, when a motion has been moved and seconded, the chair will ask for objections. If there are no objections it will be assumed all have consented to the motion being approved. Anyone with a concern or objection should speak or raise a hand.

AGENDA

Wagner reviewed the proposed agenda for the meeting (copy attached) and touched briefly on each item. The following items were of note:

- GSU vice president Curtis Cousins has left the union and begun a new employment outside the union. As a result, it would be necessary to elect a replacement to the vice president position held by Cousins.
- the need to appoint two additional Defense Fund directors
- annual meetings and the question of whether people will be comfortable attending in person.
- the upcoming virtual SFL Convention will be virtual.

MOVED by Michelle Houlden, seconded by Sharlene Lark that the agenda be adopted as presented. Carried.

MINUTES OF GSU'S 2021 POLICY CONVENTION AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Wagner stated he would go through and review the minutes of the 2021 GSU Policy Convention and subsequent meetings of the executive committee and touch on the most important items where decisions were made or direction and policy were given.

He also focused on GSU's budget estimate adopted at the 2021 policy convention and explained how serves as a guideline and benchmark – particularly on the expenditure side.

He reported that work is ongoing to oppose any exemption of grain and milling companies from the 2019 amendments to Part III of the Canada Labour Code. Due to the federal election, the government is saying they can't comment on policy while an election is underway, and they seem to have gone into hiding. We will continue to follow up on this issue.

Regarding paid sick leave, the Liberal party are proposing two weeks paid sick leave for those covered by the Canada Labour Code, and if they follow through on that promise it would be a positive development. Wagner has urged the Saskatchewan government to do the same and they have replied that they have done all that they can throughout COVID. Nonetheless, GSU

will continue to apply pressure as the Government of Saskatchewan has not stepped forward to help workers in any substantial way, and they have even left federal money on the table.

He reported that clear and comprehensive workplace policies against bullying should be a priority for Locals and the most appropriate place to address this subject is at the bargaining table. Richardson and Advance will be amongst the first opportunities to do so.

In summarizing the constitutional amendments adopted at the 2021 policy convention, Wagner reported that with the exception of selecting the next General Secretary and movement of a handful of facility locations within sub-local boundaries, all other amendments address voting and the distribution of meeting notices and other union activities using electronic means.

Adoption of the proposed amendments to the constitution regarding the recruitment of the next General Secretary meant that it will be via a hiring process conducted by GSU's executive committee with their decision(s) being subject to approval by the union's Joint Executive Council.

Wagner went on to report that GSU's lawyer, Ronni Nordal, is switching career paths to become a mediator/arbitrator, and she will no longer be taking on new files from GSU. Nordal's office will remain on the first floor of GSU's Regina office, and while it's been convenient to have a lawyer accessible to chat about issues going forward when GSU needs legal representation we will use Gerrand Rath Johnson. Consequently, we can expect an increase in legal fees as they are considerably more expensive than Nordal Law Office.

Wagner reported that a review of the union's internal complaint procedure and harassment procedure has not been done, but it will be. Other pressing items have been priorities.

Regarding representation on the Joint Executive Council (JEC), Wagner reviewed the current breakdown of membership numbers and available seats. He cautioned to remember the role of legacy locals who were here for the founding of GSU, and that every local is entitled to a seat regardless of membership population until recently when a number of smaller locals - such as the four Co-ops - were grouped together to represent 38 members with one seat at the Council table.

Looking at matters through a lens of representation by population, to achieve balance and be more equitable, Local 4 (Grain Millers) should move from two representatives to three representatives on the JEC. Local 8 could go down from three to two. However, Wagner said the current situation is not contentious, so a further discussion could take place next spring. Another option would be reducing the size of council, for instance – if a delegate is elected to the executive committee, that person could also continue being their Local's representative on the Council.

The communication policy needs to be amended to general neutral language. We have yet to do this, as it is the responsibility of each local to make those changes with their collective agreements.

Given the opportunity to ask questions on Wagner's review, none were raised.

MOVED David Barret, seconded Ben Scott that the minutes of the March 18 and 19, 2021 GSU Policy Convention be adopted as presented. Carried.

President Brown read he minutes of the April 29, 2021 and June 17, 2021 meeting of GSU's Executive Committee.

Brown called for questions or comments.

The Union's Truth and Reconciliation t-shirts were discussed and Brown displayed a sample shirt.

MOVED by Sharlene Lark, seconded by David Jones that minutes of April 29, 2021 and June 17, 2021 meetings of GSU's executive committee be approved. Carried.

BUSINESS ARISING

Wagner reported that prior to his official retirement, GSU staff representative Dale Markling had used up most of his unused vacation.

GSU Regina office renovations revealed the need for a new air conditioner and soffits. After renovations are complete this autumn, we should be fully up-to-date at the Regina building. Costs will be provided in the meeting's financial report.

The upcoming SFL convention and staff representative recruitment will be reported on later in the meeting.

At the June 17 meeting, vice president Michelle Houlden asked whether GSU could function with one less staff rep for a period of time following Markling's departure. Since then, GSU has been managing with two less staff representatives as Donna Driediger went on sick leave in late June and remains on physician-recommended sick leave at this time.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Wagner reviewed the Aug. 31, 2021 financial report in detail and elaborated extensively. The balance sheet states that GSU is in good financial shape. Our dues revenues are up modestly

and the pandemic saved a lot of staff travel with the holding of Zoom meetings. However, continuing with this model means losing valuable person-to-person interaction.

A detailed breakdown of the March 2021 convention expenses was given.

Wagner noted that the GSU Regina office's electrical panel and service had been upgraded. He reviewed the individual costs of the building upgrades and repairs in detail.

GSU has a handful of arbitrations scheduled for autumn. Wagner will be acting as counsel which will minimize costs.

MOVED Ben Scott, seconded by Jordan Jefferson that the financial report of as at August 31, 2021 be approved. Carried

Wagner recommended working through lunch until the work was done, leaving the remainder of the afternoon free.

LIFESTYLE BREAK

As the minutes recorded, a decision was made to fill the vacancy left by retired staff representative Dale Markling, with a noted preference for keeping the job in Saskatoon. That location provides access to the center-north portion of the province and eliminates a lot of additional travel and problems in terms of representation and meeting with members.

In addition, our Saskatoon office rental arrangement with RWDSU includes administrative support. GSU's executive committee and the staff union agreed that first preference will be to fill the position in Saskatoon.

The position was advertised within the GSU's *Tuesday Members' Memo* (TMM), through the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL), and through SaskJobs starting Aug. 16 and closing Aug 30. Ten Canada-based applications were received and considered, and six of these applicants were interviewed. Of the six, one is a current member of GSU.

Wagner asked that all discussion of applicants and hires into the position be treated as strictly confidential until hiring decisions were reported in the TMM, giving successful applicants time to tidy up their affairs before moving to a new job.

The hiring committee conducted interviews on Sept. 9 and 10 and reached a consensus on two candidates. After reflection and reconvening by conference call on Sept. 14 the committee still felt very strongly about both candidates and decided to come to the Joint Executive Council with a modified proposal. A written report on the hiring process was distributed and is attached to the minutes.

At this point in the meeting, Joint Executive Council representative Sharlene Lark excused herself from the call.

Wagner described the two candidates - Brian Lark (a former GSU member and current Viterra out-of-scope employee) and Mason Van Luven. Wagner also explained the hiring committee's dilemma of filling a job left by a veteran employee while also wanting to build for the future while he transitions toward retirement.

As a result of their deliberations the hiring committee was recommending hiring both Lark and Van Luven effective Oct. 12, 2021, starting with training in the Regina office.

MOVED by B. Scott seconded by David Barrett that the Joint Executive Council approves the hiring of Brian Lark into the position of GSU staff rep working out of the Saskatoon location effective Oct. 12, 2021. Carried unanimously.

MOVED by Dion Elliot, seconded by Kevin Pickup that the Joint Executive Council approves the hiring of Mason Van Luven into an 18-month term staff representative position effective Oct. 12, 2021. Carried unanimously

Sharlene Lark returned to the meeting.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

President Brown read aloud the general secretary's report to the Joint Executive Council.

Wagner briefly touched on the sections in the report before calling for questions on the report.

MOVED by Michelle Houlden, seconded by Dave Barrett that we submit the following resolution to members at their autumn annual general membership meetings:

"Be it resolved that the additional dues being paid into the GSU Defense Fund by members/employees represented by GSU shall continue until Dec. 31, 2022, subject to review by members of the union at the 2022 annual Local and Sub-Local meetings."

Carried.

MOVED Ben Scott, seconded by Sheila Tran that the report of the General Secretary be approved for distribution to members this autumn. Carried.

ELECTION OF GSU VICE PRESIDENT

The GSU's vice president vacancy must be filled from the Joint Executive Council. The person elected will serve until the GSU 2023 biennial policy convention.

Michelle Houlden nominates Sheila Tran who accepted the nomination.
Ben Scott volunteered.

Staff rep Steve Torgerson set up the confidential Zoom poll for the election and both candidates were asked to speak before the election. Following the vote, Sheila Tran was declared elected as GSU's newest vice president and Ben Scott was thanked for coming forward to run for office.

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS TO THE GSU DEFENSE FUND

Wagner reported on vacancies on the GSU Defense Fund board of directors and advised that members cannot serve on the Joint Executive Council and the Defense Fund board of directors at the same time.

In addition to the two current board vacancies, director Dennis Piasta would be stepping down in October when he retires, leaving another vacancy. In the meantime, Local 15 member Bruce Thompson has volunteered to be a Defense Fund director, and Wagner recommended his approval.

Sharlene Lark and Lynn Shaw volunteered to step down from the Joint Executive Council and serve on the Defense Fund Board.

A show of hands confirmed that all were in favour of electing Bruce Thompson, Sharlene Lark and Lynn Shaw to the GSU Defense Fund board of directors.

Wagner thanked Lark and Shaw for stepping up to address the vacancy issue.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

GSU staff reps will be reaching out to Local and Sub-Local delegates to discuss meeting preferences. Wagner encouraged everyone to discuss meeting preferences – specifically Zoom, in-person after work or over lunch – with their members to ensure input before embarking on a particular meeting model. GSU will be busy with upcoming bargaining, training two new staff representatives this autumn, and conducting AGMs and addressing priorities identified by members.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour Convention will be a virtual event held Oct. 20-22. Anyone who is interested in becoming a delegate was asked to advise GSU staff before the early bird deadline of Sept. 30

Vice president Houlden asked for direction on GSU's solidarity fund donations. She said the executive committee does its best to make decisions members would want, but they welcome Council's direction toward what they and their members are interested in supporting.

Wagner briefly described GSU's Community Connections program (an opportunity at membership meetings to donate \$50 to local community organization or charity of their choice); the annual membership dues rebate of one dollar per member per month (every local was eligible at year end to spend their dues rebate on either building membership unity or donating to a charity of their choice).

He went on to describe GSU central donations which included responding to humanitarian appeals from GSU members; solidarity donations with other unions on strike or lockout; and broader community outreach or charitable donations.

Wagner encouraged council members to share their suggestions on donations and ideas on how narrow or broad they should be. He added that GSU does not make donations to political parties and is completely non-partisan in that regard, thus ensuring the ability to criticize all governments as and when appropriate.

Wagner asked council members to submit their \$60 per diem expenses to GSU by email, adding that the only travel submission this round would be for president Brown who was present at the DoubleTree Hotel for the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Wagner thanked everyone for their time, support and interest in GSU.

MOVED by Michelle Houlden that the meeting adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

President

General Secretary