

Pension Plan Solvency deficiency appears to drop

The solvency deficiency of the SWP/GSU Pension Plan, as at December 31, 2006, appears to have declined to \$29 million according to an estimate contained in the second quarter financial statements released by Sask. Wheat Pool on February 27, 2007.

“One must be cautious about the estimate since it is just that, however, the trend is encouraging and bears out the position GSU has taken in the many months of meetings with Pool management in relation to the solvency deficiency issue. The complete actuarial valuation of the Plan, as at December 31, 2006 is

being prepared by the actuary and is expected to be received by the Trustees in April,” said GSU General Secretary Hugh Wagner.

“A troubling aspect of the estimated solvency deficiency is the manner in which it was obtained by Pool management,” Wagner said. “Apparently company management approached AON Consulting Inc. and obtained the estimate without consulting the Plan Trustees or GSU even though the actuary’s contract is with the Trustees on behalf of the Plan”.

Wagner reported he was not aware an estimate had been prepared by

AON until the issue was raised by a GSU member.

“Given the background to the pension issues one would have thought Pool management and AON would have contacted the Plan Trustees to arrange for an estimate, said Wagner. “When the numbers arrived they should have been shared with all concerned.”

“What occurred is not an example of world class or sound professional behavior in my opinion,” Wagner said.

The issue of access to Plan information is being raised with the Trustees.

Pension Plan dispute heads to Court

On January 17, SWP filed its affidavit and supporting documents in relation to its challenge of OSFI’s directive ordering the company to begin making the special solvency payments to the SWP/GSU Pension Plan.

In the beginning of March, OSFI’s lawyer and GSU’s lawyer filed affidavits in response to SWP’s claims. The next step is cross examination on the affidavits and the potential for reply affidavits. When all of the preliminary Federal Court procedures are worked through it appears the setting of an actual trial date could occur sometime in June with the matter going to trial sometime in the fall.

GSU Local meetings complete



After a few weather-related postponements, GSU Local meetings were completed at the beginning of March.

Union members who braved the uncertain weather and driving conditions received updates on union finances, pension plan disputes, organizing activities and collective bargaining preparations.

In addition, Local members who work for Sask. Wheat Pool focused on bargaining with the company and the steps involved in resolving the dispute (see in this issue of GSU News).

Members also discussed organizing (see page 3) and the current rash of news related to mergers and acquisitions in the agro sales and grain handling sector. A common theme at the meetings was the importance of being unionized in an ever-changing economy.

Winter weather and poor driving conditions weren't factors for Unit 1B (SWP Head office) membership meetings. Luncheon meetings were a success as members made the trek across the street to Regina's city hall meeting room.

The next round of local meetings will be held after the spring rush, but there a series of special meetings will be held between April 16 and 26 for union members covered by Offices and Operations/Maintenance collective agreements with Sask. Wheat Pool.

The special meetings will be devoted to voting on proposed bargaining settlements with the Pool or strike actions to bring about settlements. If you are a member in either of these bargaining units, watch your mail and the GSU web page for meeting dates and locations.



GSU News

When everyone does better, **EVERYONE** does better Issue 1 - 2007

Strike vote/Ratification meetings begin April 16

Bargaining dispute with SWP goes to conciliation

The first conciliation meetings in the bargaining disputes between GSU and SWP took place in Regina on March 26 and 27.

GSU served notices of dispute on February 5 under Part I of the Canada Labour Code in relation to bargaining covering the union’s Operations/Maintenance and Offices units at SWP.

The direct cause of GSU’s notice to the federal Minister of Labour was the 180 degree about face by SWP management and its refusal to bargain or consider settling while leaving the SWP/GSU Pension Plan dispute to be sorted out by the Federal Court of Canada.

Leading up to November bargaining meetings, SWP management had repeatedly said the pension solvency dispute was “too large” to be solved through collective bargaining and should be resolved by a third party

(OSFI). However, once the company CEO received OSFI’s direction of compliance in relation to the SWP/GSU Plan’s solvency deficiency, management’s tune began to change.

GSU tried a number of ways to get the bargaining moving again but, by the end of January, patience with management stalling ran out. Accordingly, notices of dispute were filed and on February 16 the federal Minister appointed a Conciliation Officer/Mediator to the two disputes. The Conciliation Officer/Mediator’s appointment is subject to extension for a period of time up to 60 days (April 17, 2007). Any extension beyond April 17 can only be made by mutual consent of GSU and SWP.

If the bargaining disputes are not resolved by April 17 and extension of

the deadline does not hold the promise of settlements, both GSU bargaining units and SWP will be in a legal strike/ lockout position by May 8.

“Sixteen special membership meetings will be held between April 16 and 26 to vote on proposed bargaining settlements or strike actions to bring about settlements,” said GSU General Secretary Hugh Wagner. “No one prefers a strike, but that outcome draws closer as long as SWP management keeps avoiding reality.”

“This company is financially healthy and on a mission to become an industry giant. It’s time to pay respect to employees’ needs, too,” Wagner said.

The next round of conciliation will take place April 3, 4, and 5 in Regina.

Collective bargaining agenda busy

Preparations are underway to begin agreement renewal bargaining on behalf of the following GSU units:

- Unit 1.4 - Heartland Livestock Services - Saskatchewan
- Unit 7.8 - Grain Millers - Yorkton
- Unit 8.0 - Mondrian Canada - Regina
- Unit 8.8 - AgPro Grain - Alberta and Manitoba.

A hot labour market in Western Canada and an emerging trend of collectively bargained wage increases in excess of 12 per cent over three-year terms will figure prominently in the bargaining for GSU members in 2007. In addition to wage increases, it is anticipated union members will bring a variety of proposals to the table designed to address recruitment, retention, and a more balanced work/personal life environment.

Check the GSU web page for a complete update on Unit 1A and 1B (SWP) conciliation meetings.

www.gsu.ca

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Special Insert:
GSU Scholarship Application Form

Visit our web page
www.gsu.ca

Calendar of events

Write this down!

- ✓ **Unit 1A/1B (SWP) Strike Vote/Ratification Meetings** - April 16 - 26. Meeting dates and locations will be mailed to members and posted on the GSU web page.
- ✓ **Prairie School for Union Women** - June 17 to 21, 2007, Waskesiu Lake, SK. Contact the GSU office for more information.

Day of Mourning



On April 28 remember workers who are dead, injured, and ill and publicly renew your commitment to improve health and safety in the workplace.

GSU News

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Labour's world



Changing Canada

- Percentage of Canadians that will be a visible minority by 2017 – 20%
- Number of years in which Canada will face a labour shortage of nearly one million workers – 4
- Number of years in which 100% of net labour force growth will depend on immigration – 5
- Estimated range of population growth of visible minorities from 2007 to 2017 – 56 to 111%
- Rate of growth for rest of the population – 1 to 7%
- Percentage of persons of colour with Generation X (18–34 years old) – 20%
- Percentage of persons of colour within Generation Y (5–15 years old) – 33%
- Canadian-born workers of colour aged 25 to 44 with a BA or higher – 37.5%
- Others with a BA or higher – 19.1%
- Contribution of racialized groups to real GDP growth from 1992–2006 – \$80 billion
- Cost to the Canadian economy of failure to recognize foreign credentials – \$1 billion

Our Times/CALM Source: Canadian Labour Congress, Conference Board of Canada

Louvre staff strike over job stress

Staff at Paris's Louvre museum have walked off their jobs, demanding a bonus for looking after the crowds who come to see the Mona Lisa and other popular masterpieces. Access to the museum was made free for visitors after strikers blocked access to ticket desks.

Attendants are demanding a bonus they say other categories of staff have been offered and, because of being on the floor, they suffer more stress.

“What’s unbearable is the constant hubbub of the crowd, especially in the really popular rooms like the one with the Mona Lisa or the Venus de Milo,” a striker told reporters.

Christelle Guyader, a representative of the union staging the strike, said, “When the number of visitors gets so large

(we had more than 7.5 million in 2005 and 8.3 million last year) with no increase in the number of attendants, and when more and more rooms are opened, then our work is reduced to simply managing flow.” *ILCA/CALM*

Liberals, Conservatives kill labour bill

Bill C-257 had strong Liberal support at second reading, but the bill to ban replacement workers during a strike lost the final vote on March 21 after a Liberal flip-flop that saw 29 Liberals switch their vote from yeas to nays.

The legislation would have brought labour stability and evened the playing field for workers and employers. Similar provincial legislation in B.C and Quebec has seen the number and length of labour disputes decline while economic investment in those provinces has soared.



Mindless Trivia

Before we had the likes of Saw, The Hills Have Eyes, and Scream, we had Nightmare on Elm Street 1 to 8. If you remember this rhyme, you should know the villain in these movies.

*One, two, he's coming for you.
Three, four, better lock door.
Five, six, grab your crucifix
Seven, eight better stay up late.
Nine, ten never sleep again.*

Can you identify this creeper? Get your answer to the union office by April 30 to be entered to win a prize.

Congratulations to Bob Sopher, the winner of our last trivia contest. Bob knew that Apu Nahasapeemapetilon would sell you a squishee at Springfield's Kwik-E-Mart. Bob will be receiving our new *GSU's Got My Back* t-shirt.

GSU in Organizing Mode

GSU is actively engaged in organizing new member groups into the union.

On January 1 GSU hired Mike Dalrymple for a one-year term as the union's Organizing Coordinator. On February 1 he was joined by Steve Torgerson who was also hired for a one-year term as the Organizing Executive Assistant.

Both hirings and the active pursuit of organizing stemmed from an assessment by GSU officers in late autumn 2006 that the health of the union depends on bringing new members into the organization.

Staff Rep Dale Markling filed an application for certification seeking to have GSU become the exclusive bargaining agent for a unit of employees working at the Finora Inc. special crop processing facilities in Wilkie, Sask. There are an estimated 25 workers in the proposed bargaining

unit. The application was granted by the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) on March 16. Welcome to GSU, Finora employees!

GSU also has an active sign-up campaign underway with a unit of approximately 105 school bus drivers working for the Regina Public School Board. This drive is off to a good start and its status should be clear by the end of March.

In addition, a substantial amount of preparatory and contact work is underway in relation to anticipated organizing drives with employees of other grain companies. The initial signs look promising but carrying out and successfully concluding a drive is full of challenges and obstacles.

GSU representatives will be contacting employees across the



GSU toolbox artwork is being used in our organizing drives to let workers know that GSU helps build better workplaces. Thank you to GSU members Michelle Houlden and Mike Raine for lending their many skills and their creativity to this project.

prairies to invite them to consider joining and being represented by the only organization in Western Canada that is devoted exclusively to promoting and defending the interests of agribusiness employees. Present GSU members are encouraged to lend a hand wherever they can.

Dawn Foods Pension

The Dawn Foods pension situation got a lot more complicated in January when the partial sale of the Saskatoon location operations to Dover Industries Ltd. was announced. Both the vendor and purchaser agreed the Dawn Foods Pension Plan would remain with the vendor and the remaining bargaining unit of eight employees while the overwhelming majority of employees would go into a “new” replica pension plan with Dover. All of this was purported to be done without bargaining the arrangements with either GSU or UFCW.

Grievance and unfair labour practice actions are in the works as GSU challenges yet another unilateral alteration of employees' pension rights.

Wet Goods Plant to Close

GSU members working for Dawn Foods in Saskatoon got bad news in mid-January when their employer announced it was selling its flour mill operation to Dover Industries Ltd. and closing the Wet Goods plant.

While Dawn Foods will maintain an eight-person bakery services unit in Saskatoon and 11 GSU members will transfer to Dover, the sale of the flour mill, shutdown of the Wet Goods plant and other restructuring resulted in the loss of 14 jobs.

“While there is a worker adjustment process in place and severance pay provided by the collective agreement the fact is that this once thriving operation has been stripped and torn apart as a result of narrow corporate interests,” said GSU General Secretary Hugh Wagner. “Those members who remain employed can rely on continuation of their collective agreements under the successor rights provisions of the Canada Labour Code.”

The last day of work for the seven members who lost their jobs was March 14. We wish them well.

Your GSU Scholarship Form is enclosed!

A copy of our 2007/2008 scholarship form accompanies this issue of the newsletter. The form is also available on our website at www.gsu.ca. Deadline for receipt of applications is July 1.

