

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS of the *Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union* is responsible for carrying out decisions of Convention and administering the union between Conventions.

The Board met on a regular basis during the past two years, dealing with the many challenges faced by our members, and by the broader labour movement. With your help, and that of activists at various levels of the union, we dealt with the issues and look to the future with positive anticipation.

The following is a brief summary of some of the issues dealt with since our 2014 Convention.

Board Governance

Shortly after the last Convention, the Board undertook a formal process to improve its governance practices. With the assistance of external governance expertise, we participated in several governance workshops, and through this process, identified four priority areas to work on together.

- We clarified our role in MGEU governance by developing and adopting a clear Board mandate focusing on our role in high-level oversight of management, future-oriented leadership, and renewing internal governance capacity (or foundations).
- We adopted a statement of shared values:
 - a. *integrity*;
 - b. *respect*;
 - c. *courage*;
 - d. *adaptability*;
 - e. *solidarity*;

and behavior guidelines that demonstrate our shared commitment to these values.

- We established a *Risk and Strategy Special Committee* to make recommendations on how the Board can fulfill our responsibility to provide high-level leadership on risk awareness/management and strategic planning.
- We resolved to reprioritize our time, both through our agenda and calendar, to ensure appropriate time is provided for each of the three key roles identified in the Board mandate:
 - a. *oversight*;
 - b. *leadership*;
 - c. *foundations*.

This project should be a priority for the incoming Board.

Strategic Planning

In recognition of the more challenging external environment facing the MGEU, the Board engaged in a strategic planning process, with assistance from then NUPGE President James Clancy. As a result, we adopted the following five strategic priorities for 2015-2020:

1. The MGEU's strategic plan should focus on the three pillars of our work, which are mutually reinforcing:
 - negotiating;
 - organizing;
 - campaigning.
2. While the MGEU must always maintain effective negotiating and organizing capacity, the priority in need of the greatest attention and development is campaigning. The MGEU should focus in particular on developing and improving its campaigning capacity.
3. The MGEU should embrace a broad approach to campaigning that encompasses:
 - member engagement and mobilization;
 - public engagement;
 - coalition building.

Campaigning should be proactive and continuous, involving members, activists and staff at every level of the union, and should employ a wide spectrum of tactics.
4. The MGEU recognizes that developing campaign capacity will require changes in resource allocation, staffing capacity, and roles/responsibilities of activists and members.
5. Campaigning priorities should include:
 - fighting privatization;
 - building support for the public services delivered by members.

Management and staff have been tasked with developing operational plans that serve these priorities, and the newly established *Risk and Strategy Committee* will lead in providing oversight and leadership in the pursuit of these priorities.

Finance/Administration

As a delegate, you have already received the MGEU's audited financial statements. In the last two years, we have had operating surplus of approx. \$3.3 million (2016) and \$2.7 million (2015). As a result, we were recently able to transfer \$4,995,303 in operating surplus funds to the Defense Fund, which currently stands at over \$28 million. Over the next two years, such operating surplus are expected to diminish as reorganization and strategic plans are fully implemented.

In addition, our contingency fund is healthy and we've been able to fully fund:

- our new office in Steinbach;
- expansion of the Winnipeg office to provide additional meeting room capacity and appropriate space for staff;
- several public campaigns supporting member issues over the past two years.

Our strong financial position has allowed us to expand education programs, almost double the size of the Women's Conference, and undertake the Peter Olfert-led educational project, "Protecting Public Services, Then and Now – Lessons from the 1990s."

Organizational Review

The past two years have seen us follow up on the recommendations of the organizational review that was conducted throughout 2014. Changes have been made that:

- enhance internal communication;
- provide better mentoring and training for staff;
- improve our ability to work proactively rather than react to situations;
- improve our ability to mobilize and engage activists and other members;
- make the MGEU a better workplace for staff.

The staff representatives under the Member Service Department have been divided into three units, each of which is overseen by a Member Services Manager:

Civil Service - Janet Kehler

Labour Relations - Allan Beach

Health Care - Diane Mark

Staff within these units work closely together, thereby enhancing the service they're able to deliver to members in those specific areas.

A new Public Affairs Unit has been established to manage, in a proactive fashion, media relations, government lobbying/advocacy, and issue-based campaigns.

Human Resources capacity has been added, with Joanne Mitchell joining us as HR Manager. Joanne is working to develop our own HR practices so they meet or exceed the expectations we have for HR practices in our members' workplaces.

Breigh Kusmack joined us as Campaign Organizer. She is working with other staff to organize new workplaces, coordinate logistics for strike action, and working with staff and members on campaigns. Breigh has also been updating and improving our strike manual, and working to put together materials and information related to workplace organizing.

In addition to these positions, Coordinator positions were designated in the Information Technology Unit, the Communications Unit, the Resource Centre, and the Public Affairs unit.

Alison Kauk has taken on the Coordinator duties in IT, Jeremy Peterson is Coordinator of the Communications Unit, Marlene Hubert has moved from half-time Coordinator of the Resource Centre to full time, John Baert is Coordinator of Public Affairs, and Bonny Neal has moved into the Office and Events Manager position. Graham Dowdell continues to manage the Education Unit, and Brent Smith is our new Controller and manager of the Finance Unit.

We now have a full complement of staff directors in place: Bill Anderson (Director of Member Services), Sheila Gordon (Director of Negotiations), and Jean-Guy Bourgeois (Director of Internal Operations).

The Directors, Coordinators and Managers meet weekly to share information and plan for upcoming events. Each of the units meets on a regular basis to report back to staff. This has provided a much greater level of communication and coordination amongst staff than in the past.

Each unit has developed operational objectives and plans, which are designed to:

- better coordinate work between units;
- identify duplication of work best practices in order to create greater efficiencies in our work;
- identify practices that will provide enhanced service to MGEU members.

Processes are being put in place to prioritize, track and coordinate these plans over the next two years. As we work through these plans we must be mindful of the resources we have available, and the staff time and effort involved. We believe that this work will show noticeable improvements for staff and members.

Staffing

Over the past two years, there have been significant staffing changes within the MGEU.

We would like to acknowledge the many contributions of eight long-time staff who have retired since 2014: Shelley Neel, Jack Van Mulligen, Randy Porter, Rick Farley, Liz Farler, Carol Pullen, Sharon Franco, and Rae Kujanpaa.

We also said goodbye to Monica Girouard, George Alevizos, Wendy Picklyk, Gay Pagan, and Audrey Henschell. We wish them all the best in their new endeavors.

We have added staff capacity in key areas of need, including an accountant in the Finance Unit, and a second WCB Specialist.

To fill these and other vacant positions, we have also welcomed many new staff.

Finally, we were deeply saddened when Caren Zimmerman succumbed to her battle with cancer in September. Caren's commitment to MGEU and working people in general was deep. We miss her warmth and friendship. We extend our condolences and gratitude to all of the staff who honoured Caren's memory by participating in the recent *Light the Night* fundraiser walk for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada. The MGEU was proud to be a Route Sponsor for this important event.

Organizing/Growth

The MGEU believes in the principles of building the labour movement and increasing union density. Since the 2014 Convention, our union has grown by 732 members, for a total of 42,167 members.

The new certifications since last Convention include:

Local 431	Southern EMS Superintendents (Area 4)
Local 432	Knowles Centre SAIL (Area 6)
Local 433	UWSA Non-Admin (Area 7)
Local 434	Impark Services (Area 7)
Local 435	Dakota Ojibway Child & Family Services (Area 3)
Local 436	Dakota Ojibway Child & Family Services (Area 4)
Local 437	Dakota Ojibway Child & Family Services (Area 6)

We are proud to represent these new members and ensure their voices are heard.

This brings our total number of Locals to 238.

Macdonald Youth Services (MYS) Strike

In August 2016, the MGEU had their first strike since 2000. Crisis Stabilization workers for *Macdonald Youth Services* (Local 221) officially took strike action on August 2, 2016 and remained on the picket line until a return-to-work agreement was reached on August 19, 2016.

Collective Bargaining

The MGEU bargains more than 130 collective agreements on behalf of over 40,000 members.

Since our last convention, we have had a period of unprecedented activity on the bargaining front.

During this time, due to a number of factors, many groups were at the bargaining table for unusually long periods of time. The former government dragged their feet at the Civil

Service bargaining table and did not authorize bargaining mandates for many of our other collective agreements. This was particularly frustrating for our bargaining committees and for our members.

After bargaining at many tables had stalled, the MGEU took a number of measures in an effort to pressure the government and other employers to return to the bargaining table with a fair and reasonable offer. These measures ranged from holding strike votes and information pickets to a province-wide bus tour and a silent protest at the Legislature.

Ultimately, we succeeded. Although mandates have varied, in most instances, our bargaining committees secured wage increases and other benefit improvements for members.

Some key achievements:

- At the Civil Service bargaining table, as well as other tables, such as AFM and MASC (Administration), employment security was achieved;
- At MPI, negotiations were begun and completed early, ensuring wage increases;
- Rural paramedics achieved significant wage increases bringing them closer to parity.

In summary, over the past two years:

- Over 85 collective agreements were ratified, representing 36,000 members;
- Eight strike votes were taken and, in every case, strike mandates were secured;
- One strike was held.

Public Campaigns

In 2015, the Board and staff engaged in a strategic communications planning process that culminated in the adoption of “a campaign-ready MGEU for a changing political climate.” This three-year strategic communications plan has since guided the Board and staff in decision-making about all communications initiatives, including public campaigns.

In the fall of 2015, the Board decided to replace the *Elephant Talk* creative framework with the *Keep Us Together* concept. While *Elephant Talk* was very effective in generating a public conversation about public services, it did not lend itself to more aggressive and confrontational campaigns such as those required for the 2015 bargaining campaign and tour. *Keep Us Together* was adopted because it lends itself to both general, pro-public services messaging and to more specific fight-back campaigns.

Major public campaigns over the past two years included:

Elephant Talk – Phase 3 (Spring 2015)

- A five-week campaign comprising television, radio and online advertising in all regions of the province using ads previously created and tested as part of the Elephant Talk campaign.

Fair Deal Campaign (Spring/Summer 2015)

- A three-week radio and online advertising campaign reminding Manitobans what's at stake if the government does not deal fairly with public sector workers.
- Objective: pressure the provincial government to negotiate a fair deal for the more than 25,000 members who were then without a contract.
- Encouraged members and the public to sign an online petition.
- For the first time, utilized Nation Builder campaign software to expand our campaign capacity.

Fair Deal Tour (Fall 2015)

- A week-long bus tour of nine Manitoba communities led by the Civil Service Bargaining Committee.
- Objective: get the provincial government to return to the Civil Service bargaining table with a fair offer.
- Included meetings with MLAs, member information sessions, information rallies, and media events and generated a large volume of earned news media stories in communities across Manitoba (TV, radio and print media).

Keep Us Together (Fall 2015)

- A three-week radio advertising campaign, featuring a series of new ads built on the *Keep Us Together* concept.
- Objective: to raise awareness of the value of public services and the risk posed by cuts.
- Ads created on the basis of an all-day member workshop similar to that used for Elephant Talk. Members were trained to tell their stories and record clips for radio/web ads.
- Launched the keepustogether.ca website and online campaign.

Keep Us Together (Winter 2016)

- Four-week TV and online advertising campaign featuring two new TV ads: "You'll Notice" and "Cutting Wires."

- Objective: raise the profile of public services and the risk of cuts as an issue in the pre-election period.
- “You’ll Notice” went on to win an international Summit Creative Award for 2016 non-profit videos.

Keep Us Together (Fall 2016)

- Three-week TV and online advertising campaign featuring the “You’ll Notice” ad.
- Objective: raise the profile of public services and the risk of cuts as an issue while the provincial government develops its 2017 budget.

Keeping Liquor Public (Spring 2016, ongoing)

- Launched with a coalition of community partners opposed to liquor privatization (including MADD Canada, the John Howard Society, community small business, the Council of Canadians, and a broad range of unions).
- Established the keepingliquorpublic.ca website, which was promoted with online advertising in spring of 2016.
- Also included buttons, print materials, funding a peer-reviewed research paper, and social media.

In Development

- Community-based campaigns to address the risk of auto insurance privatization and the province’s proposed social impact bonds.

Communications

Along with providing communications support to special projects such as rallies, strikes, media events, and campaigns, the Communications department expanded its efforts to keep members as engaged and connected as possible throughout the year.

The weekly *Workplace Rep eNews* continues to be sent each Friday to MGEU activists, while all members began receiving a monthly email update in 2015. The *President’s 5-minute Update* includes a round-up of recent union activities, including the latest in bargaining, media coverage and lobbying. A print version of the *Update* is also mailed out to all workplace reps for posting on union bulletin boards.

It’s difficult to engage and connect members when they’re not even in the MGEU database. So in spring 2016, a multi-unit staff team began meeting to explore how the union might improve union orientation of new hires in MGEU Locals. Working with interested Board members, Communications staff recently developed and administered an online survey to get a sense from Local presidents of current orientation practices and challenges. Results of

this survey will be used as a foundation for developing new member orientation strategies in the coming year.

Over the past two years, Communications also continued to focus on improving bargaining communications, working closely with staff negotiators to:

- ensure the latest bargaining dates and news are always available in the Bargaining Brief section of the MGEU website,
- update members via email as soon as there are any significant changes or developments at the table;
- report ratification and strike vote results on the MGEU homepage as soon as possible.

It's more important than ever for all union representatives, whether they be on the Board, on staff, or in our workplaces, to be able to articulate the value of what we do. In 2016, Communications worked with NOW Communications to develop a Message Guide to help us effectively explain what we stand for and persuasively defend public services against our critics.

Communications staff also worked with the Public Affairs Unit to establish an Online Activist Community, to mobilize members and allies to support our campaigns and causes. With this new tool, we can quickly mobilize activists to sign a petition, phone a radio call-in show, attend a pre-budget consultation meeting, send a letter to government, or whatever other action may help promote our objectives.

Member Education

The Member Education department continued to engage both members and elected activists to meet their learning needs.

Course Attendance Total: 2,258 members over the last two years.

New/Improved Courses

- Online registration using The Source was initiated in 2014-15 as a quicker, greener option to paper applications.
- Two new courses: *Health and Safety Committee Co-chairs* and *Mentoring* were successfully piloted and are proving very popular.
- *Management's Responsibility for Safe Work* moved from an Issue Seminar to a Core course and is now run more often.
- *Bargaining Collectively* was upgraded with a new section on the "environment" of bargaining and a new panel discussion to share bargaining experiences.

- More Issues Seminars were offered regionally and at different times of year rather than all in a single week in Winnipeg.
- A customized education course was delivered to members in Prairie Mountain Health HCSS Locals 412 and 421 and will be offered this fall to Interlake Eastern HCSS Local 413.
- The number of one-day Member Information Sessions held across the province was increased to eighteen with 256 members attending. Past experience suggests 25% or more of these participants became elected activists in local elections this fall.
- Twenty-two activists and staff were trained as Education co-facilitators.

\$49,000 in union scholarships and bursaries was awarded to MGEU members or their family members in 2014-2016. Fillable forms were introduced for Area Bursaries.

To raise awareness of the need to engage in more membership workplace campaigns, a new presentation looking back at the challenges and successes of *MGEU in the 1990's* was developed and delivered to the Board of Directors, MGEU staff, Local Table Officers, the Young Members Committee and several Component executive.

Joint Council

Joint Council is a form of Labour-Management Committee established under the *Civil Service Act*. Since last MGEU Convention, the government has been represented by several Ministers over a range of senior government portfolios, including the Ministers Responsible for the Civil Service, Justice, Health, and Infrastructure and Transportation. The union was represented by President Michelle Gawronsky, MGEU 1st VP Wayne Chacun, and Brother Brian Parley.

The mandate of Joint Council is to deal with labour or management issues at a macro level and work toward solutions. During the past two years the union has brought forward topics that include:

- construction of the new jail in Dauphin;
- overcrowding in jails and other justice issues;
- recruitment and retention issues throughout the Civil Service;
- the future of the Manitoba Development Centre;
- superannuation governance;
- community paramedicine;
- highways;
- payroll issues;
- the transfer of Labour to Treasury Board/Finance;
- rates of pay at the Vehicle and Equipment Management Agency (VEMA);

- provincial budgets and their implications for the provision of public services;
- union Leave Denials
- overtime Issues at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre.

Workplace Tours/Appreciation Events

In June 2015, the MGEU held a number of “Let’s Talk Public Service” events throughout the province, inviting members to come share lunch or a coffee break with their union leadership. Hundreds of members who rarely come out to Local meetings attended and took the opportunity to ask questions, share some refreshments and peruse the MGEU merchandise.

Over the last two years, the union also held an number of member appreciation events at MGEU-organized workplaces, with a special member day at the Manitoba Museum – Local 133 in 2015, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery – Local 150 in 2016. Fun skate events with the Manitoba Junior Hockey League were also held in communities throughout the province.

In June 2016, the MGEU held activist appreciation dinners throughout Public Services Week. Hundreds of elected workplace leaders from all eight MGEU Areas came out to thank you dinners in their communities.

While on the road, the MGEU President took the opportunity to meet members within their workplaces, listen to their concerns, and thank them for the valuable public service they deliver each and every day. She spoke with Correctional Officers in Dauphin, The Pas and Brandon, toured the Pineland Nursery in Hadashville, stopped in at liquor stores in Swan River, Dauphin, The Pas and Brandon and also dropped in at several MPI centres.

The President also met with many workplace groups throughout the last two years to explore their specific issues. For instance, she met with:

- Home Care Resource Coordinators and Case Coordinators within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to discuss their heavy and complex workloads and strategize ways to work with the RHA on some of the issues;
- Social Workers within Child and Family Services to gain a better understanding around the challenges they face every day.

Membership Awards

At Convention 2016, Honourary Life Membership awards will be presented to Brothers Tim Byers, Len Caminha, Randy Porter and Jack Van Mulligen.

Sisters Donna Hayward, Lisa Johnstone, Janet Pickering and Lisa Tarko will be presented with Solidarity Awards.

The Equality & Human Rights Committee have selected Slone Phan as the recipient of the MGEU Humanitarian Award.

Community Involvement

As Manitoba's largest and only union with offices throughout the province, the MGEU remains committed to the communities where our members live and work.

Whether our members came together to serve spaghetti for United Way, participate in PRIDE parades in communities around the province, or organize an awareness-raising event about missing and murdered Indigenous women in Swan River, the union did all it could to encourage such charitable activities and offer its support.

The MGEU also remains committed to investing in initiatives that forward our values of fairness, respect and sustainability. The Board, for instance, provided significant support to Red Cross relief for Fort McMurray families displaced by wildfires, and to Port in the Storm, a medical hostel that aims to reduce the financial burden of serious illness on those from rural and northern Manitoba who must travel to and remain in Winnipeg to receive treatment.

Affiliates

MANITOBA FEDERATION OF LABOUR (MFL)

As the MFL's largest affiliate, the MGEU:

- was a key sponsor of the MFL's *Working Families* campaign which gave voice to issues important to average working Manitobans, including affordable child care, safe workplaces, and quality public services, in the lead up to the provincial election.
- continued to be active in MFL annual events, including the annual Labour Day Picnic, International Women's Day, and the Day of Mourning.
- spoke out on legislation that affects our members and all Manitobans, including reforms to the Mental Health Act that recognized PTSD as an occupational-related illness and Bill 8, which guarantees victims of domestic violence five days of employment leave to escape abusive situations.

Since the last Convention, the MFL and its affiliates have in turn been vocal and active supporters of MGEU members, joining us in rallies, pickets, online campaigns and community coalitions such as Keep Liquor Public.

NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES (NUPGE)

The MGEU Board of Directors remained active in our national affiliate, the *National Union of Public and General Employees' Union* (NUPGE). Board members attended NUPGE's National Convention in June 2016, which saw the retirement of long-time President James Clancy and the election of Larry Brown as NUPGE President and Elisabeth Ballerman as Secretary-Treasurer.

MGEU workplace leaders remained active in a number of NUPGE initiatives aimed at bringing together workers from across the country who share similar occupation-related issues and concerns. Several MGEU members attended the National Convention for Community Service Workers and MGEU members continue to attend regular meetings of the Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat.

In fall 2015, NUPGE was one of the organizers of the Peace Officer's Memorial in Ottawa honouring Rhonda Commodore, an MGEU Correctional Officer from The Pas who died in a vehicle accident while on duty. MGEU was proud to send a number of our Peace Officers to join Rhonda's family for the memorial.

CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS (CLC)

In June 2016, the CLC and its affiliate unions celebrated the federal government's announcement of a modest universal expansion of CPP. Since 2009, the MGEU has been part of CLC efforts to actively campaign for an expanded Canada Pension Plan.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Gawronsky, President
Wayne Chacun, 1st Vice President
Stephen Roznowsky, 2nd Vice President
Jackie Fitzpatrick, 3rd Vice President
Melissa Dvorak,* 4th Vice President
Pat Williamson, Administration
Stephen Arksey, Clerical
Brian Parley, Corrections
Diane Arksey, Health
Deborah Jamerson, Legal
Grady Hunt, Physical Sciences
Amanda Russell, Social Sciences
Joe Dooley, Trades
Liz Dodds,*Area 1

Gerry LaBelle, Area 2
Charlotte McWilliams, Area 3
Robert Wells, Area 4
Jessie McNeill, *Area 5
Nicole Gariepy, Area 6
David Blixt, Area 7
Kurt Henry, Area 8
Marlene Hrechka, Community Support
Stephanie Swain,* Community Based Social Services
Brent Curry, EMS
Ed Miller, GOLICO
Terry Rear, Health Care Support Services
Beth Hazelwood, Manitoba Public Insurance
Carole Reimer, Post Secondary Education
Diana Schultz, Professional Technical
Carl Morden, WRHA Community Programs
Kristin Ellsworth, *ACTE

** Scott Cloney until May 2016*

** Melissa Dvorak until May 2016*

** Liz Farler until October 2015*

** Len Caminha until August 2015*

** Sue Franklin until January 2015*