

Unifor's big lie exposed

Ontario Liberal government reveals GM investments are not finalized

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In the wake of Sunday's narrow ratification by autoworkers of the "framework" agreement at General Motors (GM) Canada, Brad Duguid, Ontario Liberal Minister of Economic Development and Growth, let a little more out of the bag than he perhaps intended in his statement to the press announcing his pleasure at the sellout deal.

"Our government is now working with our partners at GM, Unifor and the federal government to assist in landing these new product investments. This agreement is extremely positive news for workers and their families in Oshawa, St. Catharines and Woodstock, and also for the burgeoning auto parts sector."

Wait a minute.

"To assist in landing these new product investments"? So, despite the phony assurances of Unifor President Jerry Dias to the 4,000 workers who toil in GM Canada facilities that his "historic" deal will save jobs at Oshawa's production facilities, Duguid states that new product investment commitments are not yet "landed." Government will "now" work with its union and corporate "partners" to try to close a deal.

Workers will not be surprised by this. Outraged. Disgusted. But not surprised. Unifor's deeply anti-democratic decision not to release any details of the deal prior to Sunday's ratification vote demonstrated that Dias' "framework" was a rotten concessionary contract, cooked up behind closed doors by pro-management union officials and GM executives to serve the interests of GM shareholders and their big business backers.

Unifor claimed during the bargaining process that the central issue was securing investment and used this to justify major concessions and to rush through a vote.

As it turns out, details of new product and job numbers have not yet been worked out. Under questioning from autoworkers on the floor of the thousand-strong ratification meeting in Oshawa, Unifor officials were unable to give specifics on the exact nature of the so-called new work being allotted to the plant.

The revelation from the Ontario Liberal government confirms the explicit warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*. We wrote, "In the current deal, Dias claims to have obtained investment commitments for the GM Oshawa plant to keep it open beyond 2019 and additional funding for the St. Catharines' facility. Workers should reject such bogus assurances. The volume and identity of the new products supposedly secured by Unifor are still to be formalized and appear as simple over-runs from other plants."

The federal government of Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has remained tight-lipped about when they will announce changes to the Automotive Investment Fund that the auto bosses are demanding to keep product in Canada. They recently signaled that they intend to eventually change their low-interest loan program to one providing grants—that is, outright cash handouts—to the auto and parts manufacturers. The provincial Liberal government is also examining their contributions to the coffers of the auto companies.

In 2009, GM and Chrysler received over \$14 billion in bailout funds (\$3.5 billion of which was never recovered by the government) at the same time as workers were blackmailed with the threat of the loss of their jobs into making wage and benefit concessions worth some \$20 per hour per worker. Any monies now shifted to the Detroit Three, all highly profitable

enterprises, will without doubt be siphoned from provincial and federal budgets, resulting in further cuts in spending on ever deteriorating social and public services, like healthcare.

The exposure in a matter of hours of Unifor's central argument in favour of the GM contract as a lie demonstrates that Sunday's GM ratification vote was a fraud. Not only were workers not able to study the proposed contract in advance, what they voted on "remains a work in progress."

Consequently, GM workers should not feel bound by it.

As for workers at Fiat-Chrysler and Ford, as they are presented with GM pattern contracts over the next several weeks, one lesson should be foremost in their minds. Not a single word that comes out of the mouths of Dias and his team of Unifor bureaucrats can be believed.

Opposition among GM Canada workers to Unifor's sellout contract continues to grow. The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* has received a large number of new subscriptions over recent days and hostile comments directed at the union bureaucracy are mounting on social media.

One GM retiree who signed up for the *Newsletter* called for the removal of the union leadership. "This contract is a complete let down," he wrote. "Dias should be ashamed of himself not thinking he did us a big favour. You sold us out Dias. Step down."

"I have worked at the St. Catherines Plant for 33 years and this has to be the lowest percent for ratification of a contract ever," a veteran worker wrote. "We gave up so much over the last 12 years and got very little back this round."

Another worker summed up the widespread sentiment with the remark, "Not happy nor impressed with the new GM contract."



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