

Unifor violated constitution to ratify Ford Canada contract over rejection by skilled trades workers

Niles Niemuth
26 September 2023

Sign up for text message updates on the auto contract fight by texting AUTO to (866) 847-1086. Join the next online meeting of the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network to discuss uniting workers in the US and Canada for an all-out strike across the auto industry. Register here to attend.

The World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter has learned that Unifor ratified the tentative agreement with Ford Canada over the rejection by skilled trades workers and in violation of the union's own constitution. The three-year agreement for 5,600 autoworkers was declared ratified on Sunday with a slim 54 percent support.

This latest information underscores that the ratification process was an anti-democratic sham aimed at passing the contract over strong rank-and-file opposition. Workers were informed of the details of the contract via an online Zoom meeting and given just 24 hours to vote via email with only self-serving highlights presented by the Unifor bureaucracy. There have been numerous irregularities reported with the email voting system. These include: workers being unable to vote, temporary part-time workers being encouraged to register on the day of the vote despite a September 14 deadline, and former and retired workers being authorized to vote.

With the contract rammed through online, Unifor is now holding physical meetings to sell the ratification in the face of workers' anger and disbelief.

Workers at Ford Oakville Assembly were informed at an in-person meeting Monday by Unifor Skilled Trades National Director John Breslin that even though skilled trades—who operate under different terms than production workers—had rejected the contract, it had

still been ratified.

“What the union basically said is that skilled trades votes don't matter because they were ignored,” a Ford autoworker told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. “Unifor's constitution was not followed by the national union to push the contract through.”

While Canadian Detroit Three autoworkers have shown their determination to join their class brothers and sisters in the US on strike for the first time in decades and wage a joint struggle to win major gains on both sides of the border, the Unifor apparatus has worked to inject nationalist poison to divide workers and insist that the union would “chart its own course.” The Unifor bureaucracy sabotaged workers' readiness to strike on September 18 by arbitrarily extending the contract by 24 hours and then announcing a sellout tentative agreement on September 19.

The Unifor bureaucracy has worked to keep workers in the dark from the opening of contract talks last month, providing no concrete details on what was supposedly being negotiated with Ford to set the pattern for GM and Stellantis. Workers were only informed of the contents of the Ford Canada sellout on Saturday—more than three days after the announcement of the tentative agreement and only shortly before the brief online voting window opened.

The agreement, now declared “ratified,” provides for a meager 15 percent wage hike over three years, perpetuates the hated multi-tier wage system, offers tiny pension increases, and provides no guarantees of job security in the transition to electric vehicle production which is set to begin next year.

In furtherance of this betrayal and in line with the entire anti-democratic ratification process, Unifor has

not released any information on voter turnout, the breakdown of the vote between production and skilled trades, or by local union. It was only amid an outpouring of opposition by workers on social media that the union announced the contract—hailed by Unifor President Lana Payne as “historic” and “life changing”—had passed by just 54 percent.

Ford workers must form rank-and-file committees in each workplace to raise the demand from the shop floor for the release of full details of the Ford contract vote and an accounting of the apparent problems with the email voting system. This protest should not be limited to autoworkers at Ford, GM and Stellantis who are next in the firing line but include all Unifor members. If the union apparatus can use such anti-democratic measures against Ford, they will use them against all 310,000 Unifor members in a range of sectors from manufacturing and mining to grocery stores and the media.

The fight to uncover the full result and force a revote on the sellout contract so workers can have their say cannot be limited to legal appeals within the Unifor apparatus. The basis for countermanding Unifor’s sham ratification process is the mobilization of autoworkers across North America in struggle against the Detroit Three and their accomplices in the Unifor and UAW bureaucracies, which are determined at all costs to push through pro-company contracts on both sides of the border.

Time is of the essence for rank-and-file workers to take the initiative. Unifor is trying to move quickly to impose a sellout at GM on the basis of the “pattern” set at Ford. While Payne announced Monday that the company would be the next target, no strike deadline has been set. Contact the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* today with any information about the sham vote at Ford and for assistance in forming a rank-and-file committee in your workplace.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact