

Leaked results reveal Ford Oakville production and skilled trades workers voted down Unifor's sham contract

WSWS Autoworker Newsletter
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We urge all Ford autoworkers to contact the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter at autorankandfilecanada@gmail.com to discuss the building of rank-and-file committees to seize control of the contract struggle from the Unifor bureaucracy and organize a revote under the supervision of workers on the shop floor.

Production and skilled trades workers at Ford's Oakville Assembly Plant voted down Unifor's sham contract during the ratification process last weekend. The details were leaked to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* Thursday afternoon by a worker at the plant, who said the information is circulating widely on the shop floor.

According to the vote breakdown, Unifor's sham contract passed by 2,330 votes to 2,006. There are reportedly 5,680 workers represented by Unifor at Ford, meaning that turnout was approximately 77 percent. Close to 60 percent of the workforce therefore either voted "No" or did not participate in the sham ratification process, which included an online voting system that was cumbersome for many workers to access. Only around 41 percent of the workforce voted "Yes" despite the Unifor bureaucracy's best efforts to browbeat them into accepting the agreement.

At Oakville, which faces a looming eight-month shutdown for electric vehicle retooling, production workers voted by 1,237 votes to 1,171 to reject the agreement. Skilled trades workers voted "No" by 122 votes to 120. Skilled trades in the Windsor Local 200 also rejected the agreement.

The opposition at Oakville comes as no surprise. On top of the miserable 15 percent wage increase over the three-year contract, which amounts to a pay freeze

when inflation is taken into account, the agreement includes no job guarantees following the EV transition. Hundreds of buyouts were offered to entice the highest paid workers to retire so Ford can replace them with low paid new hires. The agreement—which Unifor has declared ratified although it violates a union commitment that any Detroit Three must have majority skilled trades support—perpetuates the hated multi-tier wage system and the continued use of temporary workers.

The results confirm the warnings made throughout by the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, which has documented extensively how the union leadership around Unifor president Lana Payne has systematically violated the rights of the membership. As the *Autoworker Newsletter* summarized in a recent statement urging workers to repudiate the sham contract:

- Payne and the bureaucracy trampled on workers' right to strike by arbitrarily extending the previous contract by 24 hours when it expired at 11:59 p.m. on September 18.
- They announced a "historic" agreement on September 19 but kept its contents entirely hidden from the rank and file for over three days.
- The details of the agreement were presented at a single Zoom meeting controlled by the bureaucracy, after which workers had less than 24 hours to vote online.
- Many workers were excluded from the vote due to email issues.
- Numerous irregularities were reported by workers in the ratification process, including former workers and retirees being eligible to vote.

- Workers allege that mass emails were sent on the order of Unifor officials to temporary part-time workers late Saturday urging them to register to vote and dangling the bribe of a \$4,000 bonus from Ford if the contract was ratified, although the eligible voters' list had previously been closed.

- Unifor refused to publish the vote totals after announcing the contract's ratification. Only after outrage erupted on social media, did it acknowledge that just 54 percent had voted in favour.

- The union bureaucracy is still refusing to publicly provide details about how many workers participated, how skilled trades voted and the vote breakdown by plant.

The internal release of the vote breakdown was forced by the initiative of skilled trades workers, who demanded in-person meetings to discuss the contract after being informed by a union official that they had turned it down.

All Ford workers and autoworkers across the Detroit Three's operations in Canada must exploit this opportunity to intensify their campaign for a revote on the sham agreement overseen by the rank and file.

As the *Autoworker Newsletter* statement declared, "The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* urges all Unifor members at Ford Canada operations to repudiate the sham contract, which by rights should be declared null and void. Emergency meetings of Local 707 and Local 200 should be called in Oakville and Windsor to pass resolutions demanding the removal of the bargaining committee for organizing this anti-democratic farce, the publication of the results in full to reveal Unifor's skullduggery in its entirety and the holding of a revote under the supervision of trusted rank-and-file workers.

"Such a revote should take place under the control of rank-and-file workers, but only after all workers have had at least a week to review and discuss the contract in full.

"All of Unifor's 310,000 members should support these demands, which are crucial for the defence of the democratic rights of all workers. US autoworkers confront a similar conspiracy by the UAW bureaucracy, which pulled a similar move in 2015, when it declared a contract with GM ratified despite the opposition of skilled trades. They should support their Canadian colleagues.

"The struggle against the Unifor bureaucracy's

criminality must not be confined to a legal dispute. Breaking the 'pattern' that Lana Payne and the Unifor leadership set at Ford Canada by means of fraud and antidemocratic scheming depends upon the mobilization of autoworkers across the Big Three's operations in Canada and the United States in a North America-wide strike. To fight for this strategy, workers must build rank-and-file committees at every plant to take the conduct of the contract struggle into their own hands and place power where it belongs, on the shop floor."



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