

“It’s a global economy. The companies are talking to each other, why don’t we?”—Windsor Stellantis autoworkers speak out at Unifor ratification meeting

Our reporters
5 November 2023

Are you an autoworker at Stellantis in Canada? Let us know what you think of the contract and how you think your struggle can be taken forward. Email autorankandfilecanada@gmail.com or fill out the form at the end of the article.

Over 8,200 autoworkers at Stellantis’ Canada operations are currently voting on a sellout contract agreed to by the Unifor bureaucracy after it shut down a strike last week little more than seven hours after it began. With voting expected to conclude Monday and results due Tuesday, many workers at the Windsor Assembly Plant ratification meeting Saturday were eager to express their disapproval of the tentative agreement.

The majority of workers who stopped to talk to the *World Socialist Web Site* expressed serious reservations about the contract. Most predicted that the vote would be close, and the result might be decided like at Ford Canada by the vote of temporary part-time (TPT) workers, who are being offered a cash bonus at ratification exploit their precarious financial position.

A veteran worker with 25 years at Stellantis said, “They f—ked the retirees. They haven’t had a raise in 15 years, but the cost of living has been going up. They never had COLA. That’s me in 5 years.

“Our COLA doesn’t start until 2024 and it is capped at \$2.

“Looking at the highlights, the contract is heavily weighted to juniors. We have many students who are working as temporary part time workers, who are only planning to stay here four years. They are voting on something that will affect us for the rest of our lives, and they are bribing them with a \$4,000 bonus.”

The WSWs asked the worker about the EV transition. “We had a job massacre when we lost the third shift,” he said. “They negotiated to get it back in the last contract, but

it didn’t happen. There could be wording in this contract that if the sales aren’t there, they don’t have to make it happen.”

Asked his thoughts about uniting workers in Canada with workers in the US and Mexico to wage a joint struggle against the auto bosses, he said, “It’s a global economy. The companies are talking to each other, why don’t we?”

Another worker, Sarah, said, “I expected a lot more. I don’t think Unifor fought hard enough. I appreciated the wage increase, I am in the middle tier. It has taken me ten years to get to top wage. For them to delay COLA for another year is insane.”

Asked about the threat of job cuts, she said, “We make both EVs and gas vehicles, but from the way this company works, they could scrap it and leave. It scares a lot of people here.

“I think the TPT bonus will help the contract pass,” she concluded. “If the vote is close, it may push it through.”

Jerry, a younger TPT worker, said that inflation was having a heavy impact. “Everything but our wages go up,” he said. “The minimum wage keeps going up, but when they just raise prices it doesn’t help anyone. I can’t buy a home; I will have to live with others at least until I am 30. It’s ridiculous.”

Other workers had harsh words for the Unifor bureaucracy. One commented. “The union divides us. I have heard them tell a person one thing and then tell another worker something different. They pit us against each other.”

Another worker added, “To me the union is trying to secure money for themselves, the union is not looking out for us. It’s wrong.

“Right now they have us divided. The younger ones are looking at getting that bonus. The company is proposing that workers with one year will get this, and two years will get this, but they are not hiring. We have a third shift that got let

go.”

Another worker said, “Right now we have leverage. The workers in the US went on strike.” Referring to the recent retooling of the Windsor plant, which has seen the facility closed since late September, he continued, “They are putting in money to renovate our plant. They have the battery plant here. Right now is the time to push, but the union is not pushing.

“My union told me ‘don’t worry about my pension, you can fight for it in the future.’ My pension is based on how much I put in. Even if I start putting in more at the end of my years, it doesn’t help me. My pension works out to be around \$1,700 after 30 years of working. The guys before me, in the old pension (plan), are getting \$4,000.

“Every time we get laid off, my pension (doesn’t grow) because it is based on my hours worked.

“My vote is ‘No’ because of pension and COLA. I would take less money, but give me more pension. I am looking at my future.”

A worker with 10 years said, “If I read this correctly every time I get laid off they bump me up to 60 credits.

“The pensions are not enough, even the old guys in there say the pension is not enough. They are giving the guys who are already retired a \$200 quarterly increase. That’s \$60 a month.

“With the leverage they have now, I don’t think they pushed hard enough. We struck maybe an hour. I rolled up at 6 am to start my 7 am shift, we were on strike, but by 7:30 we had a deal. There was no third shift, so in reality we struck for 40 minutes. It was all for show.

“I know the union is bull. I have been with Chrysler/Stellantis close to a decade. I have had one legitimate argument with my supervisor and more than I can count with my union. I fight with my union more than with my supervisor.”

A worker who left the meeting early said, “I haven’t decided yet. I got a copy of the tentative agreement and I want to see how it is. I have a second job.

“If this passes, it is only going to be 51-52 percent. That will be mostly because of the TPTs. It will be coming down to Brampton (the Brampton assembly plant), whether they want to be out of work for 2 years.

“It’s like Chrysler are making billions. Ok, then pay us. We are breaking our bodies down. It’s a big mental hump to get over, doing the same thing every day. Then the company decides to make changes from the previous agreement.

“It seems like lately Unifor has been backing down. They never got the third shift back. Now they are saying 2025.”

Workers also responded warmly to the WSWs’s call for the ongoing global protests against the genocidal assault on the Palestinian people in Gaza to turn to the working class.

As the WSWs has explained in a series of statements, only through the mobilization of the working class in a political general strike can the imperialist-backed onslaught by the far-right Israeli regime be stopped and a solution fought for based on the unification of Jewish and Arab workers in the struggle for a Socialist United States of the Middle East.

Mohamad, an autoworker of Lebanese origin said, “It was all planned. They wanted the land. They saw an opportunity and they are running with it. They cry when they talk about Ukraine, but say it is a ‘just’ war when they talk about Palestine.

“We read that in Oakland they tried to block the weapons (from going to Israel). The workers helped.

“I have nothing nice to say about my union. They hate me.”

When told about the call by Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman for autoworkers to block production and shipment of war materials to Israel, he said, “I am with it.”

WSWS reporters distributed leaflets calling for Stellantis workers to vote “No” on the sellout contract and build rank-and-file committees to place control of the contract struggle in the hands of workers on the shop floor. The statement insisted that autoworkers in Canada must unify their struggles with those of their colleagues in the US and Mexico to counter the global onslaught of the auto bosses with an international strategy to mobilize the working class to secure decent-paying, secure jobs for all.

This is possible only through the fight to transform the auto industry into a public utility democratically controlled by the workers in a frontal assault on the profit-hungry automakers and the capitalist governments who stand behind them. We urge all workers ready to fight for this perspective to fill out the form below or email autorankandfilecanada@gmail.com.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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