

# Canadian auto industry in turmoil: GM Oshawa supplier announces 250 job cuts

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Auto parts supplier TFT Global announced last week that it will soon lay off about 250 workers who feed parts into General Motors' Oshawa assembly plant. The move follows GM's announcement last May that it plans to end the third shift at its Oshawa facility as some production of the Chevrolet Silverado is "reshored" to its Fort Wayne, Indiana, assembly plant in the wake of US President Trump's tariff policies. The end of GM's third shift in Oshawa, now expected to occur in January, will result in the loss of about 750 jobs there. Many more auto parts and logistics jobs throughout the Oshawa area will also be lost.

Jeff Gray, President of Unifor Local 222, which organizes both auto assembly and parts workers in the Oshawa area, released a statement advising workers not to get too "anxious." After all, he said, "The bottom line is business as normal until November 2025 [now moved to January]. Once the third shift is reduced in Oshawa in total, and this is including General Motors and suppliers, all in one number, about 2,000 people will lose their jobs."

Such callous prostration by Gray to the "business decisions" of the auto bosses should come as no surprise to autoworkers. The latest developments follow on the heels of GM's April statement that 1,200 workers at its CAMI Ingersoll plant will be laid off at least until November to align its electric van production schedules "with current demand." When production does restart, only 700 workers will return to their jobs. And at GM's Propulsion plant in St. Catharines, the workforce has been cut in half and now sits at 600 workers as the company has delayed a scheduled EV refit until at least 2027.

At the Stellantis Windsor, Ontario, assembly plant, more than 4,000 workers were hit by a week-long pause in production in May. The downtime followed closely on from another earlier two-week pause in April. The plant has rotated between periods of full production, reduced activity and full shutdown through the autumn. Flavio Volpe, CEO of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association, estimated that up to 12,000 more Canadian auto parts workers were now "off the job" due to Stellantis' production pauses.

Stellantis has announced that production with a full three shift operation at the Windsor Assembly Plant will not begin until at least January 2026 after more than five years on a reduced two

shift operation.

Unemployment figures released last week place Windsor with the highest level of joblessness of any major city in Canada, with 11.1 per cent of its labour force out of work—up from 10.2 per cent in July and 9.1 per cent in January. Oshawa follows closely behind with a 9 per cent unemployment rate even before the massive November layoffs take effect. Nationally, unemployment has grown to 7.1 percent with expectations for a continuing spike. The situation for Ford autoworkers is no less dire. Even before Trump's tariffs, EV restructuring had seen the layoff of over 3,000 Oakville Ford assemblers. An EV re-tooling operation shutdown the plant in the spring of 2024 with the promise that a new (albeit slimmed down) workforce would be called back in late 2026 or early 2027. However, that plan was recently scuttled, with Ford executives now transferring its projected Oakville EV production to the United States. Workers were outraged. Unifor President Lana Payne bleated a meek message to Ford's CEO stating her "disappointment and frustration." Ford's new plan is to switch to production of a gas-powered Super Duty pickup in Oakville and re-open in mid-2026 with a workforce of only 1,800.

Payne was similarly "disappointed" with the lengthy shutdown of the Stellantis Brampton assembly plant for an EV refit that began in late 2023, only months after the contract sellout forced through by Unifor. But feelings of disappointment do not pay the mortgage.

The 3,000 workers at the facility expected about a 2-year layoff as the plant was retooled for the next generation Jeep Compass. But then in February Stellantis announced that due to "today's dynamic environment," the retooling work would be "paused" for at least two more months and the remaining 400 skilled trades workers laid off. The company, which was paid hundreds of millions in government subsidies, is contractually obligated to eventually re-open and has floated a possible mid-2026 restart.

Unifor responds to this crisis by chloroforming its membership with the claim that by working with the government and corporations to build an EV industry for Canadian capitalism, they can protect workers' jobs and communities. Of course, this is a continuation of the nationalist-corporatist path they have pursued for decades and one they are

doubling down on with their support for Ottawa's trade war. It is the same bankrupt policy that the United Auto Workers pursues under Trump's tutelage in order to boost their own corporate allies in the United States in the ever-expanding global trade war. Beggar thy neighbour and the devil take the hindmost!

Payne and Liberal prime minister Mark Carney are not opposed to trade war measures in principle. They merely object to Trump's decision to impose tariffs on Canada. Both agree with the entire Canadian political establishment that Trump should focus on waging economic war on, and preparing for military conflict with China. They are eager for Ottawa to participate in a Trump-led "Fortress North America," so long as Canadian imperialism's prerogatives as Washington's junior partner are duly recognized.

Thusly, after cuddling up with the right-wing Ontario provincial government of Premier Doug Ford and promoting the career investment banker and new Prime Minister Carney, Payne writes that last week's announcements by Carney to combat the impact of Trump's tariffs "show progress" and "moves in the right direction."

Carney announced a pause in Canada's Zero Emission Vehicle mandate that stipulated a series of steadily escalating light-duty electric vehicle sales targets for auto manufacturers and importers, starting at 20 per cent in 2026 and reaching 100 per cent of auto production in 2035.

For Payne, Carney and the rest of the corporate and political establishment, tariffs are perfectly fine but only when leveraged against other competitors. "We cannot surrender the future of EV production to overseas automakers," said Payne. A Canadian 100 percent tariff on much lower-priced and better engineered Chinese EVs will be maintained as will a 25 percent tariff on Chinese steel and aluminum. That the tariffs on China dovetail with a Trump-Carney agreement to weaken China whilst massively increasing military expenditures for a future confrontation, is for them, something best left spoken only in the private business clubs and think tanks of the Canadian establishment.

Unifor also concurred with Carney's proposals for an all-inclusive, nationalist "Buy Canadian" policy and has enthusiastically supported Carney's promise to roll out some meager employment insurance supports to make up for the supplementary pay restrictions during layoff that Unifor negotiated in their last auto contracts that have left thousands of their members and their families relying on food banks to survive.

For the New Democratic Party (NDP), Carney's Friday announcement was "a good step." The praise by the NDP, Unifor and the rest of the labour bureaucracy followed by only two days the prime minister's statements outlining plans for a "budget of austerity and investment" in the coming weeks— that is to say, austerity for the working class and massive investment in military spending whilst shoring up the profits of

big business. Billions of dollars will be shifted from general public services, healthcare and social supports that will decimate workers' living standards as de-regulated raw material extraction and arms procurements are meshed with the US war machine.

What is the way forward for the working class?

Workers have no interest in backing either the "elbows up" rhetoric espoused by both the Conservatives' Pierre Poilievre and the nationalists of the so-called "left." Neither can any store be laid with Carney's growing "elbows down" approach to relations with the Trump administration. Whatever Carney does, whether he is supporting the European imperialist powers' efforts to expand the war against Russia in Ukraine or seeking to negotiate a "new economic and security" deal with the fascist Trump, he is seeking to advance the interests of Canadian imperialism.

Workers cannot fight Trump and all he represents except on the basis of a class struggle program in opposition to all factions of the Canadian bourgeoisie and by forging fighting unity with the working class in the US. Indeed, workers, whether across North America or internationally, cannot defend their jobs and livelihoods amid an unfolding global trade war—one moreover that is part of a developing imperialist world war—by lining up with their "own" ruling class.

In opposition to the union bureaucracies' efforts to corral workers behind the competing ruling elites' nationalist policies of trade war and military conflict, the working class in the deeply integrated markets of the United States, Canada and Mexico must chart their own common independent course.

They must join forces in a united movement of the North American working class, through the development of rank-and-file committees, independent of the trade union apparatus, as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). These committees will organize opposition to the demands of the ruling class for "sacrifices" in the form of mass job cuts, concessions and the evisceration of public services and social programs. Moreover, opposition to trade war and its ruinous impacts on the working class must be infused with a socialist internationalist program across the globe, key tenets of which are opposition to imperialist war, anti-immigrant chauvinism and the destruction of democratic rights.



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