

# Canadian workers express support for Will Lehman's campaign for UAW president on program of rank-and-file power

Our reporter  
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*We urge workers across Canada and internationally to send their messages of support for Will Lehman's campaign for publication on the World Socialist Web Site. Fill out the form at the end of this article.*

Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman is running in the United Auto Workers (UAW) presidential election on a program calling for the transfer of power to the rank and file. His campaign includes four key demands: abolishing the bureaucratic apparatus and building rank-and-file committees so workers on the shop floor can take control of decision-making power; ending the UAW's corporatist collaboration with big business and the government; repudiating the UAW's American nationalism and endorsement of Trump's "America First" trade war policies; and mobilizing the industrial and political power of the entire working class to defend democratic rights and oppose war.

Under conditions in which the Canadian ruling class has responded with foul Canadian nationalism to the would-be fascist dictator Trump's threats to annex the country and launching of trade war, workers north of the border have reacted with enthusiasm to Lehman's call for international working class unity. Canadian workers have experienced firsthand how the union bureaucracies, like those in Unifor, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Quebec unions, have used the same tactics as the UAW to enforce sweeping concessions and job cuts over the past four decades.

A laid-off worker at the General Motors CAMI plant in Ingersoll was eager to voice his support for Will Lehman's campaign. The plant faces permanent shuttering after GM laid off its workforce amid a drop in sales for the EVs produced at the facility. Unifor, working hand-in-hand with the federal Liberal government, is championing a proposal to have the facility manufacture military vehicles as part of Canadian imperialism's rearmament drive for world war.

"Without a deeper international cooperation of our unions,

the UAW and Unifor, along with our union and non-union brothers and sisters working in Mexico and abroad, we are far too susceptible to the divide and conquer strategy our multinational tyrant employers use to exploit us," the worker commented. "I believe Will Lehman with his unvarnished message of international unity has us directed towards the right goals. Solidarity!"

The Trump administration's tariffs and the retaliatory tariffs imposed by Ottawa have further worsened the crisis of the Canadian auto industry. Across the Detroit Three's operations in Canada, thousands of workers have been laid off in recent months. Unifor, working tirelessly to preserve its corporatist ties with the government and management, continues to pump out "Team Canada" nationalism. Workers are told that subordinating their interests to those of Canadian capital is the only option, and that they should compete with their class brothers and sisters in the US, Mexico and beyond for product placements.

This has been the animating principle of the politics of Unifor, and its Canadian Auto Workers predecessor, since the nationalist split from the UAW in 1985. During the contract talks in 2023, when auto contracts came up for renewal on both sides of the border for the first time in more than two decades, Unifor insisted on charting its own "Canadian course." It reached concessionary deals with the Detroit Three automakers even as American workers were engaged in job action. The Unifor bureaucracy went so far as to negotiate three-year deals as opposed to the regular four-year agreements, so that the next negotiating round would be decoupled from that in the US, so as to further obstruct any common cross-border struggle against the auto bosses.

"As a retired Canadian autoworker, I am in complete support of Will Lehman's candidacy for president of the UAW," said Frank F. from Windsor. "Why is it that autoworkers in Canada and the United States are not under one union? The split that happened in the 1980s was ill advised. Autoworkers in both countries have lost because of

the corporate whipsawing of one union against the other. Losses in work allocation, pensions, benefits and wages have all occurred because of it. The fragile egos of the past have hurt us all.

“Leaders in the Canadian union have come to regard our American brothers and sisters as our enemies. The time for this has to stop! The current UAW president’s endorsement of the Trump position that auto manufacturing belongs in the United States clearly lacks any reasonable analysis. I see Will Lehman as a leader who will take responsibility seriously and not make knee jerk decisions based on a popularity motive. Will’s stances on democracy and solidarity have made me realize that a better tomorrow can only happen with his leadership.”

Daniel is a rural suburban mail carrier at Canada Post and a leading member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-file Committee. The PWRFC was set up in June 2024 to fight for workers in mail depots and sorting facilities to take control of their contract struggle out of the hands of the CUPW bureaucracy and mobilize broader working class support against the gang up of the Liberal government and Canada Post management to restructure the postal service at workers’ expense.

Some 55,000 postal workers at Canada Post have been fighting for new contracts for about three years. The government is backing efforts by the Crown Corporation’s management to restructure Canada Post along the lines of Amazon through a massive expansion of “gig work” and the elimination of job protections. Former central banker and current Prime Minister Mark Carney views this onslaught as setting a benchmark to attack workers’ rights throughout the public and private sectors.

“I write to you as a postal worker in Canada facing the same corporatist assault on jobs, working conditions, and public service that autoworkers across North America confront,” Daniel commented in a letter addressed to Lehman. “I am lending my name and voice to your campaign for UAW President, because your call to abolish the pro-corporate union bureaucracy, build democratic rank-and-file committees, and organize international working-class solidarity speaks directly to the strategic needs of postal workers confronting the ‘Amazonification’ and gutting of public services here in Canada.”

One of the biggest challenges facing Canada Post workers is management’s use of AI and other new technologies to ratchet up exploitation and undermine job protections. Daniel insisted that a fight for workers’ control would enable these technological advances to benefit the workers and society as a whole, rather than boosting profits for the financial oligarchy. “New productivity-enhancing technologies are being unleashed in our sortation plants, in

our scanners, and in our depots,” he wrote. “Embracing productivity-enhancing tools is good, even necessary, in an economy as interconnected as ours, but these tools are a double edged sword. Left in the hands of Canada Post Corporation (CPC) and their union lackeys, these productivity gains will lead directly to mass layoffs and other concessions. This was made clear recently when the Canadian Union of Postal Workers leadership agreed to a secretive ‘agreement in principle’ that halted strike action and paved the way for sweeping restructures and job cuts.

“Brother Lehman, you propose a radically different approach, and this is why I support your campaign for UAW President. Postal workers should take up demands similar to yours, including the 30-hour workweek with no loss in pay. In your words, ‘Spread available work, end forced overtime, and defend worker health and family time.’ New technologies make the 30-hour work week possible, but not inevitable. Workers must organize along socialist and revolutionary lines to achieve this progressive outcome. We must organize independently of the union apparatuses, the corporations, and governments.”

Daniel concluded by pointing to the broader significance of Lehman’s campaign.

“Your campaign is not just an internal UAW fight,” he said. “It is an appeal to every worker—from the mailroom to the assembly line—who refuses to eat concession after concession peppered by the betrayals of the union bureaucrats. Your campaign appeals to every worker who believes in our collective strength. The fight at Canada Post for jobs, safe workplaces, and public service cannot be won in isolation; it requires the kind of rank-and-file, international strategy you are advancing.”



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