

Windsor Ventra Assembly auto parts workers vote by 99 percent to authorize strike

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Workers at Ventra Assembly in Windsor, Ontario, members of Windsor-based United Auto Workers Local 251, voted on August 31 to authorize a strike action. The vote was 207 in favor and two against—a 99 percent margin. There are 220 workers at the plant which makes plastic-molded automotive exterior/interior components for Stellantis and Ford.

Local 251 is the only UAW unit in Canada. It has about 1,000 members in southwestern Ontario, employed in auto parts, healthcare, railroad and other sectors. Most UAW members in Canada split from the union in the United States in 1985 to form the Canadian Auto Workers, now Unifor.

Workers at a sister plant, Ventra Plastics, also in Windsor, belong to Unifor. The two sections of Ventra workers have separate contracts with different expiration dates. Thus, the two unions have effectively divided the Ventra workforce and undermined any joint struggle.

Both Ventra plants sit close to the Ford Essex Engine plant and Stellantis Windsor Assembly plant. A joint strike by workers at the two plants would have the potential to shut down production on both sides of the US-Canada border.

In a video statement prior to the vote, UAW Local 251 President Brad McFadden said that Ventra had offered a 75 cents per hour first year raise while the union is demanding “nothing less” than C\$35 per hour by 2030 (US\$25.25). He pledged to secure cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) and “additional time off” for workers. According to McFadden, “short shifting” cost workers as much as \$10,000 in annual pay.

Sean, a member of the bargaining committee, said an average apartment in Windsor cost \$1,500 a month or two weeks’ pay. “We need more, just to live, not just survive,” he added. Haley, unit vice chair, said, “We are struggling. Single parents can’t even pay the rent half the time.”

Ventra is part of Flex-N-Gate, the privately owned auto parts giant controlled by billionaire Shahid Khan. Flex-N-Gate acquired the Ventra Group in 2001.

The company operates in 12 countries—including the US, Mexico and Canada—and its plants are strategic choke points supplying the Big Three. The workers at these plants occupy powerful positions in the supply chain. However, in contract after contract the UAW has intervened to block or shut down strike action and impose management-friendly contracts.

According to Local 251, new hires at the Windsor facility start at \$18.75 per hour (US\$13.37), a starvation wage that compares poorly even with the poverty wages at other Ventra facilities in the United States. a starvation wage that compares poorly even with the poverty wages at other Ventra facilities in the United States.

This is not an aberration, but reflects the role of the UAW bureaucracy, which has deliberately sought to drive down wages at parts supplier plants to boost profitability for the Detroit-based car companies. Four decades of UAW-administered concessions have widened the auto parts/assembly plant wage gap from 15 percent in 1980 to over 30 percent today.

One worker quoted in a recent UAW video pointed to the disparity between Windsor and US Ventra operations, noting that a Ventra facility in Ohio has a starting wage higher than the top wage at the Windsor plant.

A recent post on job site Indeed.com stated regarding the Windsor operation, “Over worked and underpaid. More work than what your position asks for and there’s no training. Stress level is high. There’s no real leadership and that starts from the top to the bottom of this company. No culpability. The union is ineffective.”

Workers at Ventra Assembly seeking to wage a real fight against these miserable conditions will not find it in the UAW or Unifor bureaucracies. Workers at Ventra should take a warning from previous sellouts imposed by

the UAW apparatus. The 207–2 vote will mean nothing unless workers organize independently to force the strike the authorization presupposes.

The contract talks take place in the aftermath of a series of sellout contracts imposed by the UAW onto the backs of auto parts workers across the US.

At Nexteer in Saginaw, Michigan 1,300 workers rejected three successive UAW-backed tentative agreements—by wide margins—only to have the fourth deal forced through in a vote held inside the plant under the eyes of management and a barrage of union threats.

At American Axle’s Three Rivers plant, a 98 percent strike-authorization vote produced a 10-day walkout that the UAW rushed to shut down with a sellout ratification on the eve of the UAW Constitutional Convention. Meanwhile at Dana plants in the UAW Midwest and South, workers rejected a deal preserving and expanding the tier system (new hires frozen at \$20/hour, senior pay capped at \$28) by a crushing 90 percent margin at Toledo Driveline, but the union refused to strike and simply extended the contract.

Bridgewater Interiors workers were stampeded into a snap ratification vote, along with the carrot of a \$2,000 signing bonus, after rejecting an earlier proposal. Fain falsely has cited the contract as a signal victory, touting the supposed achievement of a \$35 wage. In reality most workers would not see that until 2033, long after the contract expiration.

In each case the UAW apparatus used similar tactics, (1) withholding the full contract text, (2) denying workers time to study the deal, (3) holding votes under management supervision and (4) deploying a barrage of intimidation against dissent. This included orchestrating the firing of Nexteer worker—Antwiane “Tony” Sanders, who had more than 10 years on the job. He was fired in mid-June 2026 after speaking out at a UAW Local 699 contract “roll-out” meeting held inside the plant for the fourth tentative agreement.

US Ventra workers have confronted similar experiences. At Ventra Evart, Michigan, in 2022 workers there rejected a UAW-endorsed contract by 94.5 percent and then voted 98 percent to authorize a strike, but the UAW ignored the vote and kept workers on the job. The UAW then came back with a sellout deal that would have raised wages just US\$2.50 an hour over five years while workers’ healthcare premiums increased, meaning a real pay *cut with inflation at the time running 8.6 percent annually.*

The same pattern repeated at Ventra Sandusky, Ohio, in

2024. Local 1216 President Nick Nemitz admitted that 65–68 percent of the 1,120 workers held a second or third job to make ends meet but then declared “no one wants a strike.”

Workers should also take a warning from the fact that UAW Region 1 Director LaShawn English, who is running for reelection in the 2026 national UAW officers election, spoke at the Ventra Assembly strike authorization meeting. English, part of UAW President Shawn Fain’s UAW United slate, backed Fain’s fraudulent Stand Up strike at the Detroit Three in 2023 and the concessionary contract that resulted, which sold out all the membership’s key demands.

The negotiations at Ventra coincide with the September contract expiration for 17,000 workers at the Canadian operations of Ford, General Motors and Stellantis. Unifor is seeking to pre-empt strike action. It held a snap contract vote in July for 5,000 Ford workers and 4,600 GM workers in August, securing ratification of a pathetic 3 percent annual wage increase. Unifor is now seeking to ram through the “pattern” at Stellantis. Last week, Unifor announced a “pause” in negotiations before the September 20 contract expiration because Stellantis is pushing to close and sell off its plant in Brampton, Ontario, where more than 2,000 workers are currently laid off.

Far from fighting to unite US and Canadian workers, UAW President Shawn Fain has embraced Trump’s trade war policies and hailed Stellantis’ decision to move Jeep production from Brampton to an assembly plant in Belvidere, Illinois in the US.

Workers at Ventra Assembly in Windsor should follow the example of striking workers at National Steel Car in Hamilton, Ontario as well as at Nexteer, who have formed rank-and-file committees independent of the union apparatus. The immediate task is fight for these concrete steps: (1) demand the full contract and full disclosure with adequate time to study any agreement; (2) throw out the appointed bargaining committee and re-elect a strike committee from the shop floor; (3) reach out now to Ventra Plastics (Unifor), the other Flex-N-Gate/Ventra plants, and Big Three workers across the river in Detroit.



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