# Rank-and-file candidate for UAW president calls for cross-border action to defend Canadian workers against Stellantis job cuts

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Stellantis is moving to permanently close its Brampton Assembly Plant in Ontario, eliminating 2,200 jobs or close to a quarter of its Canadian workforce. Last month, the automaker reneged on its repeated pledges that the Brampton plant would reopen for production of the next-generation Jeep Compass.

On September 11, it announced a memorandum of understanding to sell the plant to Roshel, a Canadian-based arms manufacturer whose armored vehicles have been supplied to the Ukrainian armed forces and to the US ICE anti-immigrant force.

Last week, Stellantis Canada President Trevor Longley sent a letter to Brampton workers confirming the company's intention to permanently close the plant, declaring that due to "unpredictable trade policies, challenging regulatory requirements and affordability pressures," Stellantis does not see "a sustainable long-term business case that would support continued operations at the facility."

Unifor, with 9,000 members at Stellantis, has declared negotiations at an "impasse" but has issued no call for a strike even though the contract expired September 21. Instead, Unifor President Lana Payne—a member of the Prime Minister Mark Carney government's tripartite trade war advisory council—has pleaded with Industry Minister Mélanie Joly to pressure Stellantis to reverse the closure, couching the appeal in Canadian nationalist terms as vital to Canada prevailing in the reactionary Canada-US trade war.

The United Auto Workers, for its part, has been silent on the destruction of Canadian jobs. Under the leadership of Shawn Fain, the UAW has backed the tariffs imposed by the would-be fascist dictator Donald Trump that have cost the average Michigan household an extra $6,419 a year, according to the Michigan Smart Trade Alliance. In October 2025, Fain hailed Stellantis's decision to shift production of the Compass from Brampton to Belvidere, calling it a "major victory for UAW members" and proof that tariffs can "bring back thousands of good paying union jobs to the US." The UAW apparatus has not lifted a finger to defend the thousands of Canadian and Mexican workers being thrown out of their jobs by the UAW-backed trade war.

Fain has attempted to cover his nationalism with a counterfeit internationalism. Last Monday, he issued a video expressing "solidarity" with protests organized by Germany's IG Metall union against job cuts at VW, BMW and Porsche, declaring, "IG Metall, the UAW stands with you in full solidarity." But just as their North American counterparts, IG Metall is helping implement mass job cuts rather than fighting them.

Its representatives on Volkswagen's supervisory board voted for a further 50,000 job cuts, on top of the 35,000 jobs and up to a 20 percent wage cut agreed in December 2024. IG Metall director Christiane Benner received more than €380,000 (US$386,737) last year for her VW board seat alone.

Fain's "international solidarity" is a mutual defense pact among bureaucrats whose incomes depend on suppressing the class struggle.

**Lehman: "For cross-border action to stop the closure of the Stellantis Brampton plant!"**

Only one candidate running for UAW president has denounced Fain's support for Trump's trade war measures and called for the unity of workers across the border to defend jobs.

Will Lehman, the Mack Trucks autoworker and socialist candidate for UAW president, is running on a program to abolish the union bureaucracy and transfer power to the workers on the shop floor through rank-and-file committees in every factory, university and workplace. He has issued a statement titled "Defend Canadian autoworkers! For cross-border action to stop the closure of the Stellantis Brampton plant!"

In it Lehman declares, "Stellantis is moving to permanently close the Brampton Assembly Plant in Ontario, eliminating 2,200 jobs and threatening thousands more in auto parts. But Brampton is only the leading edge of a broader assault on jobs in Canada and internationally."

Lehman notes that Unifor Local 444 President James Stewart

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said this month that Stellantis has given the union no clear information on how it plans to maintain the third shift at the Windsor Assembly Plant, restored only in February, or on the future of the Etobicoke Casting Plant. More than 1,000 jobs on Windsor's third shift are at risk.

The Brampton closure is part of a global offensive, the statement declares. The German-based VW Group is moving to cut an estimated 90,000 jobs. Since the UAW signed its sellout contract in 2023, GM, Ford, Stellantis and the auto parts manufacturers have cut thousands of jobs in the United States. The reopening of the idled Belvidere plant, hailed as the centerpiece of Fain's supposed "historic" contract, has been delayed another year, until at least June 2028.

"The transnational corporations are using the trade war, the shift to electric vehicles, and the drive toward imperialist war as cover to slash jobs and swell profits," the statement continues. "In response, the UAW in the United States and Unifor in Canada are lining up behind their respective governments, fighting over which country's workers keep their jobs and which get thrown on the street. In the name of 'saving' jobs, they are handing over even more concessions on wages, benefits and conditions."

Lehman denounces Fain's support for the tariffs and his celebration of the Jeep Compass transfer to Belvidere. "This is not a defense of American workers. It is a declaration of war on Canadian workers. It divides us and plays into the hands of the executives, who want us fighting each other while they pocket the profits."

He continues: "There is no such thing as an 'American' or 'Canadian' car. Every vehicle is the product of the collective labor of workers in dozens of countries. We cannot succeed in any struggle if we allow ourselves to be divided."

Lehman's statement calls for a strike that is organized not by the union apparatus but by the workers themselves, through rank-and-file committees independent of the bureaucracy.

> The assault on Brampton, Windsor and Etobicoke can and must be stopped. But it will not be stopped by Unifor lobbying the Canadian government or bargaining with Stellantis over which plant gets the next product. Nor will it be stopped by the UAW apparatus, which opposes any joint action to defend Canadian autoworkers. The UAW bureaucrats are not concerned with the wages and conditions of UAW members, only with the continued flow of dues money, the protection of their fat salaries and the union's $1.1 billion in assets.

Because Stellantis's operations in Canada, the United States and Mexico are integrated, "a strike at one plant alone can be absorbed. A strike that shuts down Stellantis operations across North America cannot." Lehman calls on workers at Brampton, Windsor and Etobicoke to appeal directly to their brothers and sisters at Stellantis plants in the United States and Mexico, "not through the nationalist UAW and Unifor bureaucracies, but through rank-and-file committees. The demand must be simple: No plant closures, no job cuts, anywhere. Defend every job. Unite across borders."

The statement points to the militant traditions that built the UAW as a cross-border union. In December 1936, workers at Kelsey Wheel in Windsor carried out Canada's first recorded sit-down strike and formed UAW Local 195. Two months after the Flint sit-down strike forced GM to recognize the UAW in February 1937, 4,000 GM workers in Oshawa struck for the same demand. In 1945, Ford workers in Windsor blockaded the streets around their plant with more than 1,500 cars to stop a police assault on their picket lines.

It was the bureaucracy, in 1985, that split the Canadian section off into the Canadian Auto Workers, the forerunner of Unifor, "because the apparatus wanted to whipsaw jobs, wages, and conditions between the two countries. That split was a crime against the working class. The way to reverse it is to build organizations of workers that ignore the border entirely."

The statement concludes by addressing workers in Canada and the United States directly:

"To the workers at Stellantis Brampton, Windsor and Etobicoke: Do not wait for Unifor to act. It will not. Build rank-and-file committees. Demand a strike to stop the closures and defend every job. Appeal to workers at Stellantis plants in the United States and Mexico to join you. Your fight is our fight.

"To the workers in Belvidere and throughout the United States: Do not be fooled by Fain's nationalism. If it happens at all, the transfer of Jeep Compass production to your plant will be done on the basis of lower wages, speedup and the destruction of conditions that Canadian workers fought for over generations. What is done to Canadian workers today will be done to American workers tomorrow.

"The working class has no country. Our enemy is not the worker across the border. It is the corporations, the banks, the governments, and the union bureaucracies that serve them. We will fight them together."

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