



DEFEND GOOD JOBS

Canadians are devastated to hear General Motors announce it will close the Oshawa assembly plant. There are over 2,500 union jobs at stake, which impacts all the surrounding communities. Closing the Oshawa plant will hit many others - for each direct job, it's estimated that there are up to seven spin off jobs that are key to the local economy. GM says it is moving its focus to creating the next generation of low-emission vehicles, yet it is ending production of the hybrid Chevy Volt in Detroit. Economist Jim Stanford identifies the real culprits in this tragedy – the relentless demand of hedge funds for much higher returns on their shares, regardless of the damage to production capacity or the communities involved.

General Motors registered \$6 billion US in profits in the first three quarters of this year. It has been the recipient of massive public financial support, particularly after the financial meltdown a decade ago. Tragically, the Harper Conservatives sold off GM shares that came from the 2009 bailout at a bargain price and lost all leverage over investment decisions. Both they and provincial Liberals have cut corporate tax rates with no strings attached.

While GM's explanation for the closure is deceitful, we know that a carbon-neutral economy is required and that there is a growing market for low-emission vehicles. We need a just transition to that future. The Ford Conservatives have sabotaged any meaningful approach to green industrial transition with their short-sighted war on carbon pricing, while the Premier throws up his hands to say nothing can be done to change the GM decision. No politician should simply accept the outcome. Instead, Mr. Ford should be leading the charge to have future low-emission vehicle production assigned to Oshawa.

The day after the GM news, Ford held a press conference taking credit for a new Maple Leaf Foods chicken processing plant in London. He boasted about creating new jobs, but the reality is that the Conservatives are giving \$34.5 million to one of Canada's richest families (the McCains) in order to shut down three existing plants and centralize production with a net loss of 300 jobs. The plant in Toronto will be closed, killing 680 UFCW jobs in our city. The hypocrisy is stunning.

The Conservatives have said nothing about the sale by Bombardier of all of its Downsview land, followed by the sale of the Q-400 series to Viking Air in B.C. There is a real danger that Toronto could lose its largest manufacturing facility within two years if there is no pressure to maintain an aerospace footprint in the region. There are other closures as well – Campbell Soups and Bulova are shutting their doors, without a peep from Ford Nation. These changes will no doubt trigger a new round of attempts to rezone employment land by residential developers. Labour will have to work hard to defend this land for future jobs, as we did only a few years ago when Nestles and other workplaces were threatened. Ironically, the industrial vacancy rate in Toronto is now at 2% as all available space is being taken up for job creation.

Ontario and Canada need to have a true industrial strategy for the future. For years we offered the advantage of cheap electricity to power industry, but that was sacrificed on the altar of deregulation and privatization. The scrapping of Ontario's Climate Change plan, which featured investment for business to transition to low-carbon production, is a huge step backward. In contrast, the UN Climate Change Summit and reports from around the world highlight the urgency of climate action and the need for just transition. There are important sections of global capital that recognize the opportunities in a low-carbon economy, but Canada's elites seem more fixated on the cannabis market, overseas investments and profits from the digital economy than charting a sustainable future. Our number one problem is corporate greed and the system that prioritizes that over the interests of humankind. We will have to build a much broader movement to challenge the power of the wealthiest 1% in this country, and demand that every corporate decision respects people, work and communities.

The Executive Board recommends that Labour Council:

- Commit to supporting whatever actions are needed in solidarity with the members of UNIFOR Local 222 and all working people in Durham Region, and call on General Motors to reverse their callous decision. Urge all union members to support the Save Oshawa GM campaign.
- Build resistance to Ford's Conservative policies around a positive vision of what the GTA and Ontario should offer working people and our communities, including good jobs for all, a just transitions approach for industries shifting to a low-carbon future, community benefits, an equity framework and a worker/member education strategy
- Call for Ontario and federal governments to develop a "high-road" industrial strategy through a collaboration with labour and communities
- Work with City of Toronto and allies to protect employment lands so we retain and create good jobs for all

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