



Standing Together, We Can Protect Our Jobs and Our Communities

Dear Brothers and Sisters;

The last few weeks have been an incredible roller-coaster ride for autoworkers and their families. With this crisis though has come the recognition that governments have a responsibility to preserve the auto industry, which is so important to our overall economic well-being.

Every job in a major auto plant supports 7.5 jobs in the national economy. The auto industry in Canada supports 440,000 or more jobs in total, including in the auto parts sector, and generates many billions of dollars per year in tax revenues. We cannot let the financial crisis put our industry out of business forever.

Your union has been fighting hard to raise awareness of the economic importance of the auto industry, to develop pragmatic solutions to the crisis, and to counter the knee-jerk attacks on workers and unions that have come from many quarters.

We have worked closely with federal and Ontario officials throughout, urging them to play a proportional role in assisting the North American industry – in return for protecting a proportional share of jobs and investment as the industry restructures. On December 1, the union met with Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and Minister of Economic Development Michael Bryant, stressing the importance of the auto industry to economic vitality of the province and the country as a whole. A little over a week later, we met with federal Industry Minister Tony Clement and urged the federal government to do their part in supporting this key industry. That same day, Prime Minister Stephen Harper publicly declared for the first time that the government would provide aid to the auto industry.

South of the border, it now appears that the U.S. government will use funds from its \$700 billion financial aid program to help the automakers continue operating, and that the Ontario and Canadian governments will participate in that package. This is an important development, and these governments are to be commended. Governments in other countries, too (like France, Italy, Sweden, Korea, China, and Australia), have taken dramatic actions to support their automakers through the current crisis. None of those other governments demanded wage concessions from autoworkers in return for industry assistance.

Remember, banks and other financial institutions have also received massive government support in recent months. In Canada, the financial sector has received over \$150 billion in support from the federal government and its agencies since September. The same supports government offered the banks, should be provided to the auto industry: short-term low-interest loans, loan guarantees, and other measures which don't cost taxpayers a dollar. This is not a "bailout." This is a prudent response by government to a crisis that was caused by a massive failure of private finance. The alternative is to let this whole industry collapse – taking millions of jobs, and billions in tax revenues, with it.

The auto industry needs short-term help, but it also needs a long-run plan. Responding to the current crisis requires a viable long-term strategy to guide our industry in all key areas: fixing our infrastructure, investing in skills, supporting new capital, protecting the environment, and leveling the playing field in global trade.

Canada's autoworkers are ready to be part of the solution. We will not allow ourselves to be scapegoated for a crisis that reflects globalization and weak government policy. We will continue to produce top-quality vehicles, with superior productivity, at costs that are fully competitive with other industrialized countries. We commit to maintaining the competitiveness of our plants, as the industry continues to restructure.

Our productivity and quality are second to none in the world. CAW plants are 6% more productive than non-union plants in Canada, 8% more productive than UAW plants, and 24% more productive than non-union plants in the U.S. Even counting non-compensation costs (like payroll taxes to governments), our total labour costs in Canada are lower than other industrialized countries. It costs 12% less to assemble a vehicle in a CAW plant, than in a non-union factory in the U.S.

We don't know what the future will bring. I hope governments act to help the industry weather the next few months. But the longer-run challenges facing our industry are still worrisome. As the crisis unfolds, the CAW will act firmly but responsibly to ensure the long-term interests of our members, our families, and our communities.

Thank you for your confidence and solidarity. Read the information materials available in your plant or on our website (www.caw.ca). Ask your union rep if you have questions. Be ready to act in support of your union.

Together we can get through this crisis.

In solidarity,
Ken Lewenza
CAW National President

Chris Buckley
Chairperson of the CAW-GM Master Bargaining Committee
CAW Local 222 President

Rick Laporte
Chairperson of the CAW-Chrysler Master Bargaining Committee
CAW Local 444 President

Mike Vince
Chairperson of the CAW-Ford Master Bargaining Committee
CAW Local 200 President

Tim Carrie
President of the Independent Parts and Suppliers Council
CAW Local 27 President