

“A serious fightback will only develop through action initiated by the rank-and-file workers”

## GM Oshawa workers speak out against plant closure

By A WSWS reporting team  
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Julie has been working at GM since 2008. “I just got full-time when the contract came in 2016,” she told us. “It’s kind of depressing. Soon, 2,500 people in Oshawa are going to be without a job, plus more people with the feeder plant. It’s kind of devastating. You know that GM is not going to be around—and I basically rely on GM to support my family. I have a five-year-old son.”

Julie continued, “I think that the people in Mexico should have jobs as well. I feel that in Oshawa we make the best-quality vehicles and that we have for a hundred years. GM has made up their mind, and that’s what they want to do.”

She also ridiculed claims by Progressive Conservative Ontario Premier Doug Ford that he would assist laid-off workers. “Doug Ford says that he wants to give us an extra five weeks of unemployment insurance, but what’s that going to do for us in the long run when we’re not going to have a job at all?” said Julie. “Five weeks isn’t going to be enough to support a family. There aren’t a lot of job opportunities in Oshawa or even in the surrounding areas. Everything is rising, the price of food, clothes. I don’t know how people are going to survive.”

WSWS reporters also spoke to workers at a nearby Walmart. Grant said, “The unions now, they’re a corporation too. It’s ridiculous. People are saying the unions basically are autocracies at this point.”

A worker who asked for anonymity for fear of victimization said, “I back you guys 100 percent. They went slave labour here. Every company is doing it. I work for a company that did the same thing. They went

to China, and then they were looking at India as their next slave labour weapon.

“The government wrote off Chrysler’s loan, they wrote off GM,” added the worker, referring to the multibillion-dollar bailout for the auto companies orchestrated by the Federal Conservatives and Ontario Liberal government in 2009. “How many billion was it? \$10 billion GM got. It’s ridiculous. They’ve taken advantage of everybody because the money the government gave them is our money, our tax dollars. We want something back for our tax dollars. We used to talk about what would happen if GM ever closed down. Oshawa would be a ghost town.”

Sherry, who lives nearby and has family at GM, said, “I feel for the people, I really do. We are so dependent on GM that we are at their mercy. The unions have never helped us out. I think they were good at one time, but now I don’t know.

“I really feel for people at minimum wage—14 bucks an hour is not enough. Back in my parents’ time, the economy was meeting the wages of the people. You may have only made two bucks an hour but you could go and get a load of groceries. You can’t do that now.”

The WSWS also received written statements from Canadian readers of the *Autoworker Newsletter*. Frank, a veteran worker at the Windsor, Ontario, Fiat-Chrysler assembly plant, wrote, “The GM announcement is once again a move to drive up the price of GM stock.

“The closures will be devastating. In Ontario, it will be a tremendous blow, adding to the unemployment and underemployment problem that is now systemic in our province. Unifor’s response has been mediocre. No

plant picketing. No plant takeover. No action. So far it's all talk."

Bruce Allen, a retired veteran of GM's St. Catharines engine plant, wrote in support of this Sunday's fight back meeting in Detroit organized by the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. "Fellow Workers, I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere hope that your meeting will be very successful and will facilitate meaningful, sustained opposition to these plant closures by General Motors," he stated.

"It is abundantly clear that a serious, effective fightback will only develop through action initiated by the rank and file workers and outside of the control of the union bureaucracies. It is imperative that this fightback also be supported by as many workers as possible employed by other auto and auto parts corporations including your counterparts in Canada and Mexico and beyond."

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