

## Why Unifor is asking consumers not to buy GM vehicles made in Mexico

# GM is sending Canadian jobs to Mexico.

At a time of record profits, GM wants to close its top-quality Oshawa plant, throwing thousands out of work. At the same time the company is expanding in Mexico to take further advantage of low pay and a lack of human and labour rights. In 2014, GM confirmed plans to spend \$US 5 billion to double production in Mexico<sup>i</sup>. If GM closes Oshawa, by 2020 the company will have cut annual production in Canada by 418,000 vehicles (67%), while increasing annual production in Mexico by 304,000 vehicles (47%). GM also recently announced plans to close two assembly plants in the United States. It's clear that GM is shifting jobs to Mexico.

## What's Mexico's record on human and labour rights?

Mexico has an extremely poor record on human and labour rights. Most Mexican workers cannot freely join independent democratic trade unions. The vast majority of so-called unions in Mexico are controlled by companies and the government, work to suppress wages, and are not recognized by international labour union federations<sup>ii</sup>. The UN's International Labour Organization<sup>iii</sup>, and Human Rights Watch<sup>iv</sup>, regularly raise serious concerns about rights in Mexico.

## What does GM pay its workers in Mexico?

GM workers are paid an average of just \$US 2 per hour at its assembly plants in Mexico. A comprehensive study released in 2017 detailed wages at GM's San Luis Potosi, Ramos Arzipe and Toluca plants that ranged from 29 to 44 pesos per hour<sup>v</sup>. Even allowing for moderate wage increases since then that works out to an average below \$US 2 per hour, at current exchange rates. Auto parts workers are paid even less. After-inflation wages have not grown in Mexico since NAFTA was signed 25 years ago<sup>vi</sup>.

## Is this action aimed at Mexican workers?

Absolutely not. Unifor has long advocated for stronger human and labour rights in Mexico. We have a proud record of working directly with civil society organizations in Mexico, and supporting the handful of independent trade unions in the country. Through the union's Social Justice Fund<sup>vii</sup>, Unifor has two projects underway to strengthen democratic unions and promote human rights in Mexico. During the re-negotiation of NAFTA we worked directly with our Mexican allies, including hosting a delegation of independent labour leaders in Ottawa<sup>viii</sup>, to successfully push for measures to raise labour standards in Mexico. Mexican workers are not helped by GM perpetuating a system designed to suppress their wages and rights.

## Why focus on GM?

GM has been the most aggressive automaker operating in North America to take advantage of low pay and a lack of human rights in Mexico. Last year GM became the largest automaker in Mexico for the first time, and will soon be building one million vehicles per year in the country, with the vast majority exported to the U.S. and Canada. Other automakers have operations in Mexico too, and we have always been opposed to buying Mexican-made vehicles built under exploitative conditions. In its pursuit of ever-higher profits, GM has simply gone too far.

## Is this a boycott of all GM vehicles?

No. We are urging consumers to support our GM members by continuing to purchase the excellent high-quality vehicles built by union members in Canada and the United States.

## Which vehicles should I buy?

For more than fifty years, our union has had a policy urging consumers to purchase North American union-made vehicles. There are 72 vehicles on the current list, which can be found at [SaveOshawaGM.ca](http://SaveOshawaGM.ca). These vehicles are made in Canada or the United States by members of Unifor or the UAW. Because of the integration of vehicle production in both countries, vehicles listed as made in the United States include significant Unifor-made content and support the jobs of Unifor members. Both Unifor and the UAW<sup>ix</sup> support the purchase of union-made vehicles from both countries.

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- i. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/gm-to-invest-5-billion-to-expand-facilities-in-mexico-1418323909>
  - ii. <http://www.industrialunion.org/industrial-rejects-mexicos-latest-labour-reform-proposal>  
and <http://www.industrialunion.org/ctm-thugs-kill-two-brothers-at-the-media-luna-mine-in-mexico>
  - iii. <http://www.lbs.adv.br/conteudo/2018/pdf/informativo-sindical/Informe-Anual-Peritos-CEACR-OIT-2018.pdf>
  - iv. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/mexico>
  - v. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13154.pdf>
  - vi. <https://www.businessinsider.com/mexico-wages-incomes-poverty-2017-2>  
and [https://www.moodys.com/research/Moodys-says-structural-impediments-to-Mexico-growth-remain-despite-NAFTA--PR\\_371005](https://www.moodys.com/research/Moodys-says-structural-impediments-to-Mexico-growth-remain-despite-NAFTA--PR_371005)
  - vii. <https://unifor.org/en/about-unifor/unifor-social-justice-fund>
  - viii. <http://www.industrialunion.org/node/58268>  
and <https://www.unifor.org/en/take-action/campaigns/north-american-free-trade-agreement-nafta>
  - ix. <https://uaw.org/app/uploads/2018/11/2019-Vehicle-Guide-v2.pdf>