



Mike Van Boekel Speech – Auto Council May 19 2023

In 2009 GM declared bankruptcy.

GM came to the UAW and CAW demanding major concessions.

When I say GM in my speech feel free to substitute the words Ford or Chrysler (it was Chrysler back then), Ford never declared bankruptcy but were more than happy to join in the concessions that were part of bargaining.

From 2007 until 2009 the car companies went through hell – at least they will tell you that, and that is what the books showed. The car companies were looking for bail out money to help them survive. The government then forced the Union's into deep cuts as they teamed with the car companies to put the boots to us.

Major concessions from the 2009 CONTRACT

BENEFITS

Drug Plan – the co-pay started, up to \$330 per year

Dispensing fees came into our world.

Dental – started with yearly lags in the payment system.

Semi-private coverage in the hospital was eliminated.

Monthly health care contributions started, even for retirees - \$30 a month until age 65, then \$15 month.

WAGES

Frozen for 3 years.

Base wages 2010 \$34.18 2023 \$37.33 13 years we gained \$ 3.15 (24 cents) (approx. ½ of one per cent a year)

Minimum wage in Ontario: 2009 was \$9.50 our starting wage in 2009 was \$28.54 – our starting base wage was \$19.04 more than minimum wage

2023 minimum wage is \$15.50 our starting wage is \$23.67

Our starting wage is now only \$8.17 above minimum wage

During this period of time the company's profits more than tripled since their best year prior to the bankruptcy.

COLA in 2009 - introduced us to a new concept called Frozen COLA– our COLA has essentially been frozen since 2009.

Pensions – frozen since 2006 – people who retired in 2006 – 17 years ago the people who retired are getting the same money as people who have retired until now. 17 years later.

P COLA

**** has been eliminated since 2009****

Vehicle Discount Program – eliminated

Dependent Scholarship Program – reduced to \$1300 annually

Tuition Refund Program – program was terminated

El Claw back Program - eliminated – for years the company actually paid our entire El claw back

Health Care Trust - program was born and implemented 1 year later

Wash up Periods - eliminated, we used to actually get paid 3 minutes to wash up prior to lunch and at the end of shift, 6 minutes a day in relief time was eliminated

NEW HIRES – this was the beginning of the evolution of the word tier two

- Starting wages rolled back to 70%
- New hire grow in period was pushed back double from current time frame
- Pension credits capped at 30 years
- Modified SUB plan
- And the ground work began for true tier 2 system that rots us to this day

TRADES - Full Utilization for the trades was greatly reduced across many plants.

VACATION – we lost 80 hours of time off when the SVA program was eliminated. All senior members lost 25% of their vacation time

We did all this to help GM survive. Ford & Chrysler also took all the same economic hits across the board.

Since 2010 the car companies haven't just made profits, they are drowning in money. I have all the profit statements for GM for the past 20 years as they state publicly. I will concentrate on GM. Prior to 2007 the car companies made money – if you consider 1- 3 billion dollars a year profitable.

Since 2011 the car companies' profits have gone from 4.6 billion in 2011 (the highest profits recorded) to over 10 billion per year now.

In 2022 - 10 billion dollars in profits, every salary person at GM was given double their respective maximum bonus allowed – double.

In the bargaining years from 2012-2021 the Union bargained contracts that ensured our job security. During bargaining the Union bargained major investments across the Big 3 and kept our footprint for Auto in Canada. At the same time, they made modest gains in the area of economics as Mexico and the southern states remained viable threats for expansion. The car companies have not only rebounded from 2009, but they are now making profits they never dreamed of before. Stellantis made 16 billion in 2022, GM over 10 billion. Profit sharing cheques for the past decade have remained extremely strong and it's time for us to receive our fair share.

We have never scratched the surface of getting back anything we have given up – we can't even get back to the starting point of what we had in 2006 when GM was making 3 billion a year let alone make any true gains in the past 14 years to remotely keep up to inflation.

We have a two-tier system that rots us to our core – we have people working side by side, doing the same job, but taking 8 years to be considered equal in the eyes of payroll.

Every single item we gave up should be looked at – how can GM possibly say they can't afford everything we had in 2006 when they were making \$3 billion dollars but in 2023 when they are making over \$10 billion a year, they will say they can't afford it – money is tight – the future is tough.

The future's here, it's now. The word tier 2 must be eliminated from all contracts. COLA vs profit sharing. We basically lost COLA in 2009 and it was great in its time – but the times have changed. How can you look at your members when the companies are making 10 billion a year and tell them COLA is fair. The companies are drowning in money. \$10 billion a year, every year!!!!

How do our retirees have to pay \$15 for their health care when they gave 30 plus years of their lives to these companies?

How do I walk the line and tell a new hire they will make the same as me in 8 years when the company is paying every salary person double their max bonus – in years when GM can't produce vehicles due to Covid, semi-conductor issues, etc., they still attain profits of over \$10 billion a year.

20 years ago, when you started at GM you felt like you won the lottery.

My first 15 years you could count the number of members who quit on one hand – you did not quit a big 3 job.

I could count the number of trades people who quit each year using one finger. If a trades person wanted to, they worked 7 days every week and 12 hours every weekend – if they wanted to.

Now our new Oshawa plant have 1.5 people quit a day. 1.5 people every day!!!!

I can hardly keep a trades person in my plant if they are under 40. They are getting picked left and right and are leaving. In our area right now, we have plants such as Toyota and Maple Leaf Foods who cannot attract workers to run their lines. We have an Amazon plant hiring thousands next year. Volkswagen just announced 3000 more jobs are coming to our area – how are we going to attract new members. With our current tier 2 wages and 8-year grow-ins we aren't even in the running.

Two years ago, our plant manager at the time, Linda Trebizan, gave me a letter offering all skilled trades \$5.00 an hour more on their base rate, effective immediately – it was her quickest way to try and stop the migration of trades from leaving our plant. I gave the letter to Jerry Dias who stopped the pay raise. He didn't want trades only getting a raise as she refused to give production a raise at the same time.

The company offered my skilled trades an 11.5% raise in the middle of a contract. And the union said no, Dias said he wanted both production and the trades to receive the raises. At some point we will settle this contract and my trades already know the union turned down an 11.5% increase in year one – this contract is all about economics.

They can move to Mexico ...

They can move to the southern united states...

They need money to launch their new electric plants...

They are chopping salary headcount...

They will have no shortage of excuses, but our members have suffered tremendously over the past 3 years. Covid, semi-conductor issues, parts issues, the vast majority of our members, all of the members we represent in this room have not earned full wages over the past 3 years. Groceries, heat, hydro, interest rates, it has become expensive just to live, let alone try and save any money.

We don't need a good contract; we need a great contract – we need a contract that the Toyota and Honda workers will be forced to sit up and take notice.

We need a contract where skilled trades are fighting to start at our plant, we need production workers who “win the lottery” and are proud to walk through our gates, proud to pay their union dues and stay and build up solidarity in our plants – a place where mom and dad can provide for their children and save for their retirement years.

In solidarity,

Mike van Boekel.

