

The Canadian government is considering using a \$250 million dollar fund - meant to assist in the development of environmentally friendly and fuel efficient vehicles – to entice GM to continue providing jobs in Oshawa, Ontario.

The loss of 2600 jobs could be devastating to the community as for each job provided by GM, there are other jobs created by those families when they buy food, shelter, clothing, entertainment and so on. To just let those jobs disappear will have a rippling effect on the entire community, which would be economically devastating for the region. However, let's ponder the following...

- GM is a large company and has had the opportunity to become a leader in new technologies and take a new direction in the auto industry. Instead, they have chosen to put their heads in the sand and turn a blind eye to the inevitable changes to come. There are many companies ahead of them, including Canadian firms such as ZENN Motor Company.

- They are choosing to move operations to Mexico where labour is cheap, and worker's rights are not as strong as in Canada. Will they be paying a living wage in Mexico? How will we know?

- The government should seriously question their commitment to new sustainable automotive technologies.

- They have taken a loan from the Ontario government for \$175 million, which included an agreement to maintain minimum job levels. They are now renegeing on that and the Ontario government has said that they will TRY to recover some of that loan based on this. The federal government's reaction is to offer up to another \$250 million. I think the government should look at GM's track record before offering more money.

- \$250 million dollars invested in 2600 new jobs or in retraining GM workers for new car manufacturing technologies works out to about \$100,000.00 each. More than enough. Some workers may even opt to retrain for new industries where there is a real need for skilled workers. Retraining workers and creating new jobs that are in line with the future trends and technologies will last longer than and be a better investment than filling in the holes of a sinking ship.

- The plant is slated to close sometime in 2009. There is time for the workers to retrain and for the government to encourage more forward-looking companies and technologies.

- I'd like to know GM's responsibility to employees that are laid off. Is there anything in the agreement about severance pay or retraining allowances for workers who are laid off? Maybe GM should finance retraining rather than our government. Has the union been forward thinking in this area? Have they negotiated something in their contract?

So instead of delaying the inevitable - the loss of traditional jobs as the auto industry undergoes a transformation - why don't we look to the future. Out of what may appear to be devastating economical circumstances, we should be looking for opportunities to support Canadian companies that are on the forefront and helping families that depend on the auto industry to transition with the industry or get out now while getting out could be a good thing.

Read the related article on CBC: [Ottawa may use green fund to help GM: Flaherty](#)

Where do you think the auto industry is going in the next few years? How can today's auto worker prepare for the road ahead?

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