Good morning chair and members of the committee.

My name is Dino Chiodo and I am the president of Unifor Local 444 in Windsor as well as the Chair of Unifor’s Ontario Regional Council.

Our local union represents 17,500 active and retired workers throughout Windsor and Essex County. Our members work in many industries, including food processing facilities and casinos; in road transportation, aerospace, energy, elder care and most notably, the auto industry.

In fact the auto industry and autoworkers continue to play a significant role in the economic wellbeing of this city.

Windsor has the highest auto industry concentration in Canada, with the Chrysler assembly plant, major engine facilities (including Ford in Essex) and more than 50 independent parts suppliers. In these operations alone, there are more than 12,000 direct jobs – with thousands more created in spin-off industries like steel, plastics as well as office workers, car dealers, engineers, researchers, and so many others.

As vital as this industry still is for Windsor-Essex, it is a shell of what it once was.

Since 2001, Ontario has lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, including over 40,000 in the auto industry and more than 10,000 in Windsor alone.

In just over the last decade we’ve witnessed the closure of General Motors’ transmission plant in 2010, the Lear parts plant in 2007, Chrysler’s truck plant in 2003 and major cutbacks at Ford’s engine facilities – just to name a few.

It’s no coincidence that the deep hollowing out of Windsor’s auto industry traces back to the turn of the century. It was in 2001 that a long-standing trade policy, known as the Auto-Pact, was official abolished – as directed by the World Trade Organization.

I don’t need to revisit the history of the Auto Pact for this committee, as I’m sure you are well aware of it.

I raise it only to reconfirm the direct and deliberate effect trade policy has on Canada’s export industries, especially auto – Canada’s number one export. In 2015, Canada exported more than $76 billion worth of auto goods to the rest of the world.

Let’s fast forward to 2016 - where smart trade policy has been supplanted by something completely different.
The Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement that is before us, offers no benefit to Canada’s auto industry. It is hard to see how the TPP will help attract new auto investment to Canada. Our fear is that it’ll simply drive it away.

In fact, it’s unimaginable how our negotiators would conclude a deal with so many major auto concessions.

We agreed to phase-out our 6.1% passenger vehicle tariff in 5 years, when the U.S. protected its tariff over 25 years.

This U.S. extension is considered appropriate by industry experts to guard against more one-way trade flows from Japan. How does an accelerated tariff phase-out help Canada’s auto industry?

We also agreed to lower the vehicle content thresholds for cars and parts in the TPP, further below the current NAFTA standard. Now, a vehicle mostly made in China (up to 55%) can enter Canada tariff-free. What’s worse is that TPP allows for a special “flexibility” that further reduces that threshold by an additional 10%.

These rules will simply encourage automakers to explore new sourcing arrangements from lower-wage jurisdictions. How does this benefit auto parts’ workers in Ontario and, specifically, in Windsor? How does this develop our Canadian production capacity?

I think the answer is clear. It doesn’t.

What’s worse: I think autoworkers in Canada have been sold a bill of goods.

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I’ve been following closely the committee hearings so far. I was struck by something Jim Balsillie said in his presentation on May 3.

He not only criticized various parts of the TPP, he criticized Canada’s overall approach to trade.

I’m paraphrasing here, but he suggested our approach to trade negotiations is based on “myths” and “orthodoxies”. In fact, many of the third-party studies released suggest there is little to no benefit for us at all.

Yet we are plowing ahead on the blind faith that if you tear down rules and regulations, if you limit the decision-making powers of governments, and if you just give corporations more freedom to make money – then somehow we’ll all be better off in the long run.

For more than 30 years we’ve followed that game plan. And it’s not working.

NAFTA promised jobs and prosperity. Instead, we saw our auto trade deficit with Mexico balloon to $11.5 billion last year. And we saw a series of new investor lawsuits by U.S. firms, under Chapter 11.
The recent Canada-South Korea agreement promised new opportunities for auto exporters, and fairness — instead Canada’s exports fell by 3.9% in the first year.

Now the TPP promises more of the same. More prosperity. More jobs. We simply don’t believe it.

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This is a deal we simply cannot accept. The potential damage this will bring to the Windsor community in the long-term is severe. We’ve seen what bad trade policy can do to our jobs. And we don’t need more of it.

Ultimately, Canada needs to rethink its general approach to trade. Rejecting the TPP might help kick-start this discussion, and that’s not a bad thing.

A principled and fair trade framework could provide us a new lens to explore trade enhancement – in a manner that’s intentionally transparent, collaborative, that’s mutually beneficial and strives to raise standards for all workers and citizens across nations.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share my views with the committee and look forward to your questions.