



WHAT UNION REPRESENTATION LOOKS LIKE FOR CANADIAN AUTO WORKERS

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What union representation means

Having a union means more than negotiating wages, benefits and working conditions.

It is about establishing a support network of elected representatives inside the workplace, to enforce the collective agreement, to address worker concerns, to monitor health and safety, to provide training and offer general support.

In Unifor auto plants, there are dozens of negotiated representatives available to assist members every day, a team built over decades of contract negotiations.

In virtually every round of bargaining, the union attempts to expand and broaden the scope of in-plant representation.

This is the fundamental role of the union. Negotiating a workplace structure that enables workers to help each other and improve their standard of living on and off the job.

This document provides several simple examples of the roles and responsibilities of negotiated union representatives commonly found in Unifor-represented auto assembly plants.

UNION REPRESENTATIVES



FRONT-LINE REPRESENTATIVES/ UNION STEWARDS

Union Stewards, elected by the members, represent their interests in each department, line or designated area in the plant. Elected Union Stewards engage with members on a daily basis. If there is a problem with overtime pay, an equipment malfunction or problem with a supervisor, for example, a member will inform their Steward who will promptly handle the issue on the members' behalf.

AREA OR DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE

Depending on the size of the plant, there may be dozens of front-line **Union Stewards** elected to assist members throughout the facility. To support the work of these Stewards, members will also elect an **Area or District Representative**—individuals who oversee all union business within a designated Area or District of the plant.

The Area or District Representative is responsible for supporting the work of Union Stewards, and stepping in to assist if an issue cannot be immediately resolved. This includes assisting in the resolution of grievances filed by members.

Members in the Skilled Trades have access to a dedicated, elected District Representative that deals exclusively with trades-related issues.



UNION REPRESENTATIVES CONTINUED



IN-PLANT COMMITTEE

All **Area** or **District Representatives** (along with an elected **Skilled Trades Chairperson**) in a facility comprise the **In-Plant Committee**.

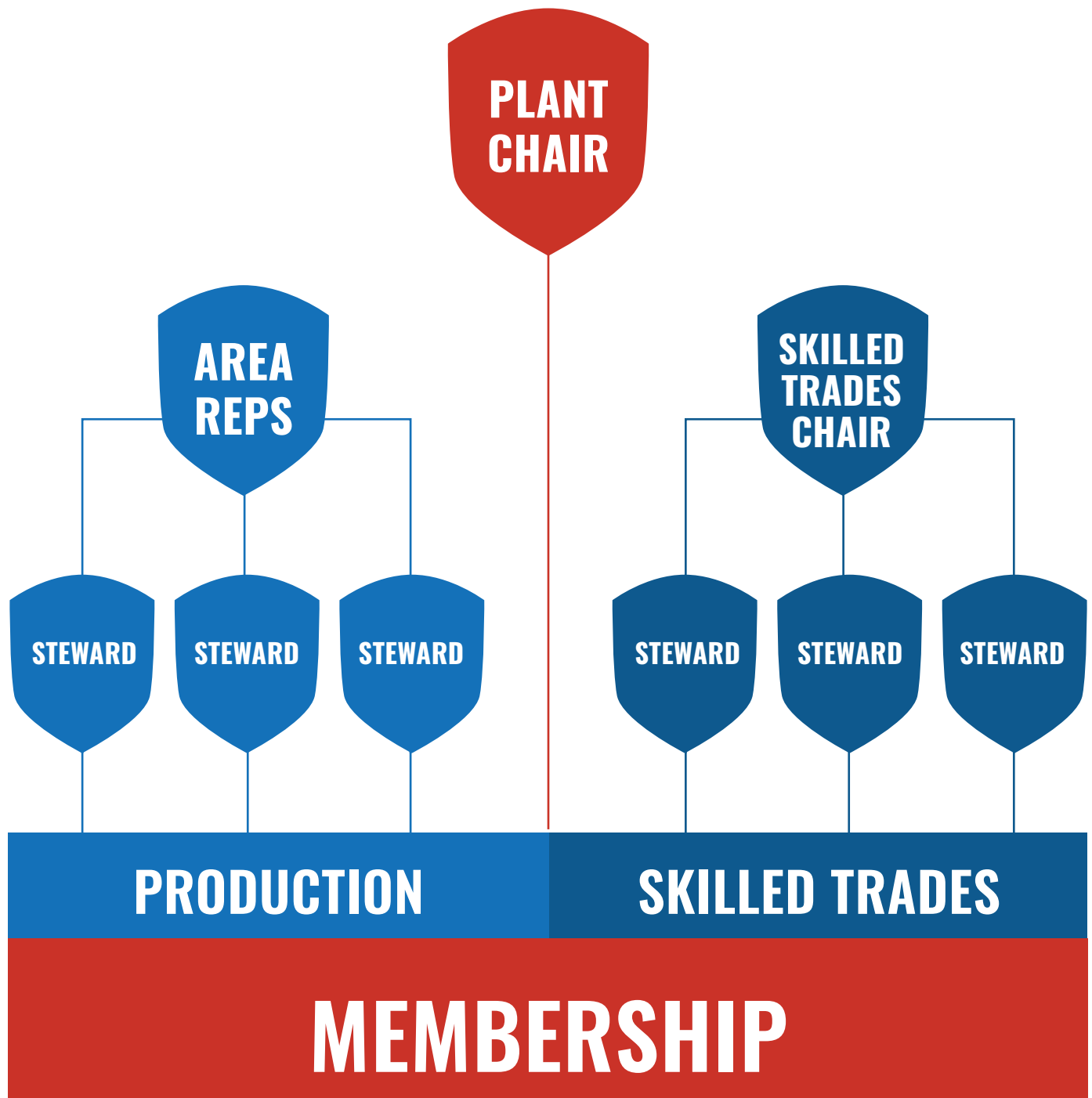
Members of the In-Plant Committee meet regularly (oftentimes daily) to discuss members' issues throughout the plant. The In-Plant Committee makes sure Union Stewards and company Supervisors apply contract provisions consistently, in all Departments and Districts, including on job postings and vacancies, for instance.

PLANT CHAIRPERSON

The **Plant Chairperson** oversees the work of the In-Plant Committee, and is the top elected union official in the plant. The Chairperson (or "Chair") is ultimately responsible for all union matters in the facility. The Chair will engage directly with the Plant Manager and Company officials, and will communicate all critical matters back to the members. Each Unifor assembly facility has its own elected Plant Chairperson and In-Plant Committee.



IN-PLANT REPRESENTATION STRUCTURE



FULL-TIME SPECIALTY ROLES

HEALTH & SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE

A trained union **Health & Safety Representative** is available to assist members in the plant on each shift. These representatives carefully monitor health and safety issues in the facility and offer proactive and preventative guidance to keep members safe, wherever required. They also participate in the workplace Joint Health and Safety Committee, along with the Plant Chairperson. Union Health & Safety Representatives operate without fear of employer reprisal, providing they follow proper guidelines and protocols under law.



ERGONOMIC REPRESENTATIVE

A union **Ergonomic Representative** is stationed in each facility and responsible for monitoring member issues on work practices, equipment usage (e.g. efficiency ratings on torque guns) and injury prevention. The Ergonomics Representative will bring major issues to the attention of the Plant Chairperson and will directly engage with the employer through a Joint Union-Management Ergonomics Committee.



TIME STUDY REPRESENTATIVE

The union **Time Study Representative** ensures members are working at a pace that does not put their health and safety at risk. Automakers have extraordinary power to adjust and accelerate assembly line speeds, which can be detrimental to workers' health. Time Study Representatives monitor the pace of work, rate jobs and raise concerns with company officials through the Joint Union-Management Time Study Committee.



FULL-TIME SPECIALTY ROLES CONTINUED

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD (WSIB) REPRESENTATIVE

The union **WSIB Representative** stationed in each plant offers dedicated support and guidance for members injured on the job, and supports them in their application for government and employer-sponsored benefits.



BENEFIT REPRESENTATIVE

The union **Benefits Representative** operates in each plant and assists members with questions related to health benefit eligibility as well as Employment Insurance claim support during periods of layoff.



PLACEMENT REPRESENTATIVE

A union **Placement Representative** is standard in all Unifor-Detroit 3 production facilities. These individuals assist members seeking work re-assignment and return-to-work accommodation following an injury, for example.



FULL-TIME SPECIALTY ROLES CONTINUED

EQUITY REPRESENTATIVE

The in-plant union **Equity Representative** is responsible for workplace human rights issues, including bullying and racism. The Equity Representative assists union members facing discrimination or a denial of basic rights and coordinates with company officials (through a Joint Union-Management Equity Committee) to resolve complaints and promote a harassment-free workplace.



GRIEVANCE COORDINATOR

Union members in auto plants have access to a grievance procedure, which is a formal complaint system for alleged violations of the collective agreement. Typically, the union will assign a **Grievance Coordinator** to track grievances and ensure a timely resolution. The Grievance Coordinator may advise the Plant Chairperson and appropriate National Union Staff Representative whether a particular late-stage grievance warrants final stage arbitration.

EMPLOYEE FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EFAP) REPRESENTATIVE

The union **EFAP Representative** assists workers and their family members who may be dealing with personal issues, including addiction, drug or alcohol abuse and mental health struggles. The EFAP Representative provides confidential referrals to appropriate counselling, community support as well as treatment and rehabilitation services.



PART-TIME SPECIALTY ROLES

ENVIRONMENT REPRESENTATIVE

The **Environment Representative** is responsible for monitoring the environmental impact of in-plant work practices and addressing waste, such as oil spills, leakages. Working collaboratively with company officials, the Environment Representative also monitors the proper storage, use and transportation of hazardous materials and provides regular reports to the Plant Chairperson and union membership.



WOMEN'S ADVOCATE

The **Women's Advocate** is a specially trained union member who assists women with concerns such as workplace harassment, intimate violence and abuse. The Women's Advocate is not a counsellor but rather provides support for women accessing community and workplace resources.



RACIAL JUSTICE ADVOCATE

The **Racial Justice Advocate** is a groundbreaking workplace representative in Canada, first negotiated during Unifor-Detroit 3 auto talks in 2020. The Racial Justice Advocate is a union representative trained to assist fellow members who are Black, Indigenous or People of Colour facing racism or harassment. This Advocate will work collaboratively with company officials to establish and implement a workplace Racial Justice Action Plan.



WORKPLACE TRAINERS

TRAINING COORDINATOR

The union negotiates funding from the company to conduct in-plant training, in a variety of different areas. The union **Training Coordinator** oversees these training programs, monitors certification requirements of fellow union members and provides assessments to supervisors to ensure members receive skills training as needed (including for the Skilled Trades).



IN-PLANT TRAINERS

A team of union members serves as **In-Plant Trainers**. These individuals have the qualifications to both train and license fellow members on a variety of different advanced certifications, including forklift driving, working in confined spaces, working from heights, WHMIS, CPR and others.



For more information visit:
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