

## Windsor retailers relieved with Chrysler pact: ‘It’s fantastic news’

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Chrysler Windsor Assembly plant workers Jodi Sisson and Ted Gagnon are all smiles as they start their midnight shift in Windsor, Ontario on September 26, 2012. The Canadian Auto Workers and Chrysler have a tentative agreement following negotiations in Toronto, Ontario on September 26, 2012. (JASON KRYK/ The Windsor Star)



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Employees at Chrysler’s Windsor Assembly Plant aren’t the only ones breathing a sigh of relief after the carmaker and the Canadian Auto Workers’ union reached a tentative agreement.

The deal reached late Wednesday night, after similar settlements with Ford and General Motors, prevented a strike or lockout that could have affected thousands of workers across the region.

“Absolutely, it’s a big deal to have this uncertainty removed,” said Matt Marchand, president and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce. “A burden has been lifted and we hope that people will be more confident in their spending habits.

“There are upwards of 6,000 employees at Ford and Chrysler making a comfortable wage and much of that money finds its way into the local economy. We can now continue focusing on moving the region forward.”

Windsor autoworkers pump more than \$790 million into the region's economy each year and a strike at any of the Detroit Three operations would have taken a huge bite out of that figure, according statistics compiled by the CAW.

"It's fantastic news for the city that all three have settled," said Mark Vrecic, sales manager at Windsor's Performance Ford. "I'm even happy that Chrysler settled because it would have been a huge hit on the city's economy if they'd gone on strike.

"We have a pretty loyal customer base so we didn't have much of a drop-off, but now that everyone's settled it's full steam ahead for us."

John Skelton, sales manager at Provincial Chrysler, said his staff had been anticipating a slowdown in sales leading up to contract negotiations.

"It happens each time and then once an agreement is reached, people feel more confident again," said Skelton. "We've had people come through our dealership and tell us they weren't sure what, if anything, they were going to lose and that they'd be back once it was settled.

"We're expecting a pickup in business for the next couple of months now that people are confident about their jobs."

There are about 13,000 jobs tied directly to the auto industry in the Windsor area, including almost 5,000 at the Chrysler assembly plant and many others in plants which feed parts to the home of the minivan, says the CAW.

Chrysler workers produced 301,450 minivans last year and Ford workers in Windsor cranked out 410,000 engines.

Autoworkers paid \$216 million in income, payroll and sales taxes, and \$56 million in municipal property taxes in the Windsor area, the union says.

Vrecic said word that Ford will be offering retirement incentives, including a new car voucher worth \$20,000, to entice long-serving employees to retire will also be a boon to his dealership.

"We had thought those vouchers might not be offered again but now they are is good news for us and for Ford retirees," he said. "It's a big plus for us because even retirees like to buy cars and this is a nice incentive."