



## A letter to Honda Autoworkers

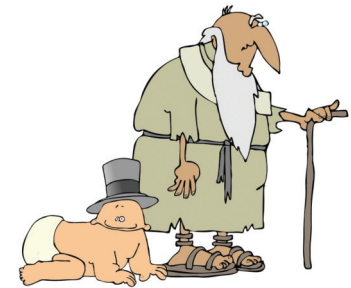
# Season's Greetings to Honda Workers from the CAW

**As 2011 draws to a close, the CAW would like to wish the best of the season to all Honda workers.**

This has been a challenging year for Honda – but also for the workers who make Honda one of the most successful and consistently profitable automakers in the world.

The catastrophe of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan had an immense impact on Honda's operations around the world, and Canada was not immune. Then, no sooner were operations getting back to normal than the floods in Thailand knocked the company off its stride again. The economy has been challenging, too. The high yen makes Honda's Japanese-made vehicles more expensive in global markets (although it makes the Canadian operations more appealing).

All this turmoil has affected Honda workers, too. Uncertainty in working hours. Contracts not renewed. Lost income.

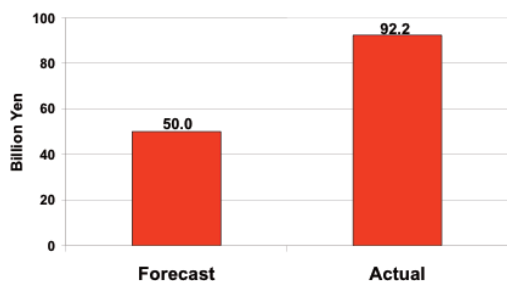


And now the company wants to make up for lost time, by cranking up production. So it squeezes workers all the more. A faster line, more intense work, tighter job design. That means a harder day, with greater risk of injury and RSIs.

**How are Honda workers compensated for all this? With another wage freeze.**

That's very interesting, considering that the company has remained profitable *despite* all the troubles of the last year. Last month the company announced profits of 92 billion yen (or \$1.2 billion) for the first half of the fiscal year. That was almost twice what they had forecast earlier. The company is grappling with big challenges. But it is still making billions.

### Honda Profits First Half 2011-12



(Source: Company reports available at [world.honda.com](http://world.honda.com).)

We in the CAW understand that the auto industry is an inherently cyclical business. It always has plenty of ups and downs. No-one can prevent those cycles, least of all a union.

But we can still work together to make sure workers don't bear the brunt of problems we didn't cause. We can demand fairness, even in tough times. In fact, it's just as important for a union to protect its members during the downdraft, as it is to make progress during the upswing.

That's why our collective agreements with unionized automakers have all sorts of provisions to defend workers when they are harmed – individually, or collectively – by events beyond their control.

Supplementary unemployment benefits that top up EI during lay-off. Short work week benefits for unexpected down time. Income and protection when you are sick or injured.

We hope that 2012 is a better year for the auto industry, for Honda, and for everyone who works here. And we remind you that without the voice, and the protection, that comes with a union and a legally binding collective agreement, every Honda worker is vulnerable.

You'll be hearing more from the CAW in 2012. It will be an important year for autoworkers, since we're renegotiating our contracts with the Detroit Three in September. (And as you know, the CAW's bargaining sets the trend for your compensation, too.) We'll explain the whole process as we go: from electing the bargaining reps, to conducting membership surveys, to negotiating the new contract, and then ratifying it by secret ballot.

When's the last time you got to vote on your wage?





# Divide and Conquer?

HCM recently announced that it would hire 65 new permanent workers. That is excellent news.

Funny coincidence, that Honda should wait for a union drive before announcing its first permanent hiring here in 6 years.

Here's the only problem. There are well over 1000 contract workers at Alliston. And only 65 of them are being offered the chance to get off the treadmill. Finally being able to tell the bank you've got a "real" job. Finally knowing your livelihood extends more than the next 9 months.

For the rest of the contract workers, you're told to keep waiting for your day in the sun.

It's not even clear how the 65 will be chosen. Fairness demands it should be on the basis of seniority. But without a contract, and a union to enforce the contract, it's not at all clear how it will happen in practice.

It's normal for an auto plant to have *some* flex workers, to meet the normal fluctuations of work. But not thousands of them. And not for 6 years at a time.

There's an old saying: "*Divide and Conquer.*" And Honda practices that philosophy with gusto. By creating two classes of worker in the same workplace "three if you include Manpower Temps", Honda tries to sow division that undermines the conditions of all.

Here's how the abuse of contract workers hurts everyone in the plant:

Contract Workers	Permanent Workers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lower wage.</li> <li>● Few if any benefits.</li> <li>● Re-hiring every 9 months.</li> <li>● Vulnerable to arbitrary dismissal.</li> <li>● No protection for illness or injury.</li> <li>● Permanent insecurity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No guarantee of seniority rights in hiring or layoff.</li> <li>● Undercut by lower wage and insecurity of contract workers.</li> <li>● Inadequate protection for injury or illness.</li> <li>● Company always tries to erode permanent workforce.</li> </ul>

Controlling the use (and abuse) of contract workers is a key union priority in any plant. After all, Honda is a "permanent" company. The workers should be permanent, too.

A key feature of every collective agreement is the "scope" clause, which ensures that everyone in the bargaining unit is covered by the contract, and prevents the employer from sidestepping the collective agreement by using contracts or temps. The collective agreement also specifies the conditions under which contract or flex workers can be used. It limits how many can be hired. And how long they can work for, before converting to permanent.

Best of all, the contract specifies the rules under which members can move up from one job category to another. You will know the rules. And the union will enforce them. Doesn't matter how you looked at the team leader last week.

And remember: every Honda worker at Alliston has the legal right to join a union. Doesn't matter if you're permanent or contract. You do the work. And you deserve the protection of a collective agreement.

**If you are interested in learning more about the CAW, please contact us at [organize@caw.ca](mailto:organize@caw.ca) or 1-877-495-6551 (all messages are treated 100% confidential). Check out our web site at [www.caw.ca](http://www.caw.ca)**

**We wish each of you and your families a safe and happy holiday, and best wishes for a prosperous and secure 2012.**

