UAW: We're Open To Lower Wages

ORION TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — The United Auto Workers union would be open to expanding a wage structure with lower-paid workers to keep General Motors Co. factories open or reopen closed plants, a top union official said Tuesday.

Vice President Joe Ashton, who handles GM bargaining for the UAW, said the union "will look at anything when it comes to negotiations that will retain jobs."

He made the comments during a press event at a factory in Orion Township, Mich., near Detroit, where at least 40 percent of the hourly workers will be paid about half the $28 per hour wage of longtime UAW workers. His comments were reported by The Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press.

The UAW agreed to expand the so-called second-tier wage at the plant last year to get GM to build the Chevrolet Sonic subcompact there. The plant also will build the Buick Verano, a luxury version of the Chevrolet Cruze compact. The factory will reopen to make the cars later this year.

The wage deal saved roughly 1,500 jobs that probably would have gone to Mexico. But it rankled some UAW members who said it's one more in a long list of concessions that the union has made to a company that is now profitable. T

No other car company builds a subcompact in the U.S. because the profit margins are too low to cover the higher labor costs.

Ashton also said Tuesday that the UAW will try to get GM to reopen plants in Spring Hill, Tenn., and Janesville, Wis., during national contract talks that begin this summer. It also will try to prevent the closure of a pickup truck plant in Shreveport, La., plant in 2012, as well as secure more vehicles for facilities elsewhere.

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