

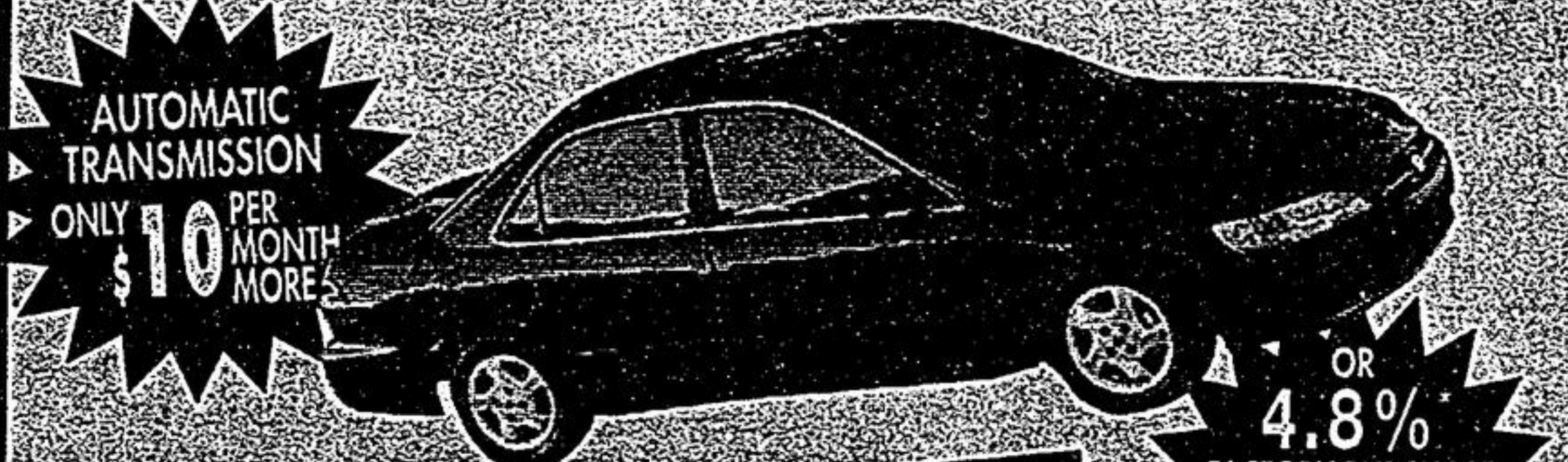
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GM strike forces Magna to issue layoff notices

Auto-parts maker sends home hundreds of workers

RICK VANDERLINDE
Staff Reporter

The General Motors strike is forcing layoffs at Magna International, York Region's largest employer.

With 10,000 workers at 38 York Region plants, the car parts manufacturer is being forced to lay off hundreds of employees.

Magna officials aren't saying how many workers have been laid off, but the Aurora-based company has confirmed that it has reduced production at 46 of its southern Ontario plants.

The layoffs started slowly but have escalated in the past few days as GM has been forced to shut down auto assembly lines in Canada and the United States.

Graham Orr, Magna's vice-president of corporate development, said the GM strike has created a "chain reaction" that has "clearly affected" Canada's largest independent auto parts maker.

Since GM is one of Magna's largest customers — it accounts for \$2 billion in annual North

American revenue — a protracted work stoppage will continue to cut into Magna's York Region workforce.

Camslide in Newmarket, a Magna plant that produces car seat tracks, has already lost one assembly line, laying off temporary workers.

It's unclear how other Magna plants, scattered around the region, are faring.

But York Region is the hub of Magna's Canadian operation, with more than two-thirds of its 14,000 Canadian workers employed here.

GM began closing assembly plants last week after two striking factories in Flint, Mich., could no longer supply parts.

The strikes have sparked major layoffs by independent parts suppliers, such as Magna, who collectively employ more workers than GM.

When production slows at Magna, a spillover effect can be created at smaller businesses that rely on the manufacturing giant.

This is the second time in two years that Magna workers in York Region have been threatened by a GM strike.

In 1996, some employees were temporarily laid off when auto workers at GM's Oshawa and Sainte-Theresa, Que., plants hit the picket line.

The central issue in that strike was out-sourcing, or contracting out, of more components of GM vehicles to companies like Magna.

While the GM strike will affect some Magna workers, the company also holds major contracts with Chrysler, Honda and Ford.

One Magna worker said he doesn't fear layoffs because his plant also supplies some of the other auto makers with parts.

Magna, which moved into its Aurora headquarters last year, operates under several subsidiaries in York Region.

Atoma Int. is located in Newmarket, while Decoma Int., Cosma Int., and Tesma Int. are all located in Concord.

Those companies provide the head offices for the 38 plants within York Region.

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