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OPINION POINT OF VIEW

To be economic leader, we have to get to work

By **PAUL BERTON**

A new provincial report this week boosting London as a leader in the new economy is good news for the city and the region -- but we can't simply sit around and wait for it to happen.

We must start now to make it happen and create a new economy that looks to the future rather than resting on the accomplishments -- however considerable -- of our past.

As Richard Florida, one of the report's authors, says, "a handful of cities -- from London through Kitchener-Waterloo through Toronto and Ottawa -- together comprise one of the world's largest economic mega regions that helps make Ontario one of the most advanced and productive jurisdictions on Earth."

To take advantage of this potential, we need better education and transportation, the report says.

Indeed, London's political and business leaders are working hard to make London a transportation centre for rail, air and highways, and we're perfectly suited for it, given our location between Toronto and the United States, as well as points beyond.

Florida has identified London as a creative-class city, something many on council and in the community have worked hard, and not without challenges, to create and maintain.

But being creative is not just about the arts (though it is that). It is more about how a city can look forward and anticipate what potential residents and visitors are looking for in a community. We already have many of those attributes, but we must continue to work hard to maintain and grow them.

London has a thriving research community, partly as a result of the university and college and hospitals, but also because we've worked hard to attract the kinds of businesses to London that require it.

Finally, some of those organizations are indeed manufacturing companies. And while manufacturers are particularly vulnerable to the kinds of economic challenges we're currently facing, they also add much to our intellectual and innovative abilities, and we can't ignore them in our quest for needed diversification.

The report offers us the perfect opportunity to renew our commitment to new, balanced, creative, forward planning, and some hard political lobbying.