

Industry is embedded in a town's culture

Editorial

Oshawa made headlines this week for a decision by General Motors to shut down its factory in the city at the end of 2019. The move was made for the company to invest in new technology that has triggered anger and uncertainty for thousands of residents wondering about their future. GM wants to focus on lower emitting electric and autonomous cars. The move will reportedly free up \$8 million, according to various news reports. The Cadillac XTS, Chevrolet Impala, GMC Sierra trucks and Chevrolet Silverado were built at the plant.

Losing a job is something I hope nobody has to go through, but I already mentioned my experience in the Nov. 15 editorial. Virtually every community is known for a specific field. When people think about Fort MacMurray, Alta, they think oil patch workers. Timmins is known for their mining field, Pittsburgh, P.A. in the states has a dominant steel industry that is represented in their National Football League (NFL) team and Green Bay W.I. has a team named after the Acme Packing Company built a facility in the community.

Towns and communities across the North America are known for some sort of industry and that in turn shapes its culture and heritage. Imagine if Caledon had large skyscrapers and buildings on every corner. That wouldn't look like Caledon. It would look like Toronto. This town is known for its vast farms in each area while new town houses and condos pop up (in the previous editorial I mentioned it's possible to have a balance of agricultural lands and new developments).

If Caledon was full of new buildings replacing prestigious farmlands in every area, it will be just another town. It wouldn't look like Caledon.

That's what's happening to Oshawa. I attended college in Oshawa studying journalism.

In my time in Oshawa I learned about the significance of GM's auto plant in the city. GM was the crown jewel of Oshawa. For multiple generations, middle class Canadians spent their years working there to feed and house their children with the hope their offspring can go to college or university. It's roots trace back to the horse and buggy days.

Col. R. Samuel McLaughlin was a pioneer in the city. In 1887, McLaughlin worked at his father's company McLaughlin Carriage Works in the upholstery department. The company would craft horse buggies. He would later establish McLaughlin Motor Car Company in 1907, which later developed a partnership with GM. His prominence is implemented in the city's public libraries (McLaughlin library branch), schools (R.S. McLaughlin CVI) and museums (Robert McLaughlin Gallery) that are named after him. His mansion, Parkwood Estate has become a national historical site featured in many films such as *Chicago*, *X-Men*, *Fever Pitch* and *Undercover Brother* among other movies.

McLaughlin's work to develop the plant was implanted in the history of Oshawa.

Imagine if Caledon didn't have the Cheltenham Badlands, Downey's Farms or Albion Hills. It wouldn't look like Caledon. Oshawa is facing an identity crisis with the loss of GM.

Nothing can be done about the plant and the impact that the 2019 closure will have on the 2,500 workers affected but maybe they may be able to find solace and refuge in Caledon with Amazon creating 800 full-time job in its new warehouse and UPS building a \$200 million facility.