

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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Calgary is among the cities that have incorporated rail into their public transit. Using Waterloo as an example, letter writer Ken Westcar says it's a direction that London and Southwestern Ontario must consider.

Waterloo transit plan builds on its success

It would be prudent for the leaders of the City of London and surrounding community to study the starkly different approaches taken by Waterloo Region and Hamilton on both land use and transit planning.

The takeaway question would be whether London and Southwestern Ontario will aggressively plan for a bright future or continue the slide into economic obscurity and societal mediocrity.

That Waterloo Region has a strong future is no longer in doubt. It's home to leading technology companies, forward-thinkers and innovators. And it's taking major steps forward to sustaining and building on that success.

In addition to tightening up on land-use regulations to protect groundwater and farmland, the region is implementing a modern transit system designed to encourage the tech sector and other future-focused enterprises to expand.

Considerable effort has been invested in the co-ordination of transit with people, including the use of adjacent brownfield sites for new residential and business premises and the creation of a downtown transit hub that will feature cross-platform integration with Grand River Transit bus and light rail systems, GO services and Via Rail.

In contrast, Hamilton, while having similar chal-

lenges, has so far elected to put less emphasis on transit integration and to apparently encourage sprawl by eroding farmland and building or expanding roads. Many brownfield sites remain liabilities rather than assets. Plans for light-rail lines seem to be gathering dust.

Yes, it will receive improved GO Train services, but the city is unlikely to match the livability and inherent attractiveness to new investment being sought so proactively by Waterloo Region.

As a future-oriented investor or career-minded young person looking for opportunity and community, where would you prefer to go? To answer it is essential to understand that younger generations of people and progressive enterprises no longer accept old ways of doing things. Values have changed.

As the London region looks to the future, it must have the courage to make some difficult decisions. It will need to overcome entrenched opposition from those who prefer more of the same. But the same will have diminished appeal to the new forces of economic and societal progress. Following Waterloo Region's example would be a very safe bet.

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