

City has 'hyper-concentration' of jobs, report says

Economy is undergoing 'definite shift' as knowledge-based work clusters downtown

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TORONTO CITY HALL REPORTER

A fundamental economic shift is "hyper-concentrating" new knowledge-economy jobs in Toronto's downtown as traditional manufacturing employment evaporates across much of Southern Ontario, a new report warns, and the trend has major ramifications for public transit and land-use planning.

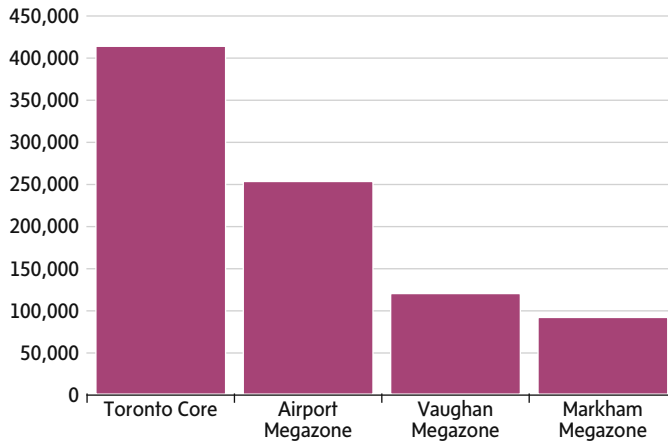
The study, released days after General Motors announced the shutdown of its assembly plant in Oshawa, Ont., says the lopsided job growth is a permanent change, not a cyclical pattern. It warns Toronto's transit system will be placed under further strain. The report also argues smaller communities outside the city should seek to attract the jobs of the future, rather than cling to dying industries.

The report, funded by the Ontario government and produced by the Neptis Foundation urban-planning think tank, uses data based on the locations of jobs across what policy-makers refer to as the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), the region that surrounds Toronto and runs from Niagara to Peterborough.

Over all, the number of jobs in the region has grown. But from 2006 to 2016, Toronto's downtown gained 67,000 of what the study calls "core" jobs, or jobs that bring income into the region and drive growth, as opposed to jobs such as those in retail that largely serve local residents. Many of those downtown jobs are "knowledge-based," in industries such as finance or technology or "higher-order business services" such as accounting or law, which tend to cluster together.

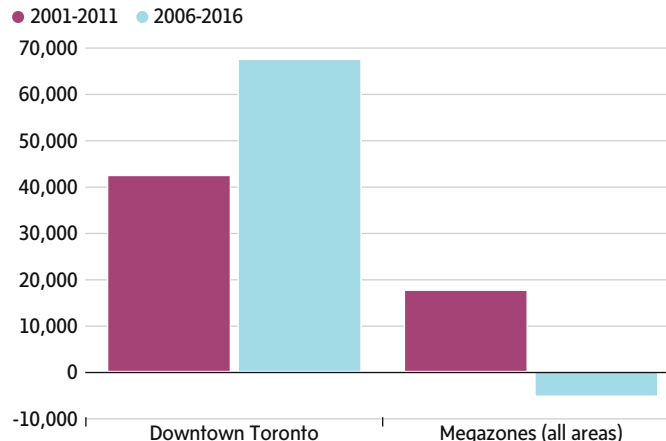
Meanwhile, the GGH region as a whole shed 130,000 traditional manufacturing jobs from 2006 to 2016, a figure that does not capture last week's news of the more than 2,500 jobs slated for elimination when GM shuts its sprawling Oshawa plant east of Toronto. "It's happening in a way that is both high growth, and highly disruptive at the same time," study author Pamela Blais, a planner with a doctorate in urban economic geography from the London

Core employment in 2016, downtown Toronto vs. other megazones



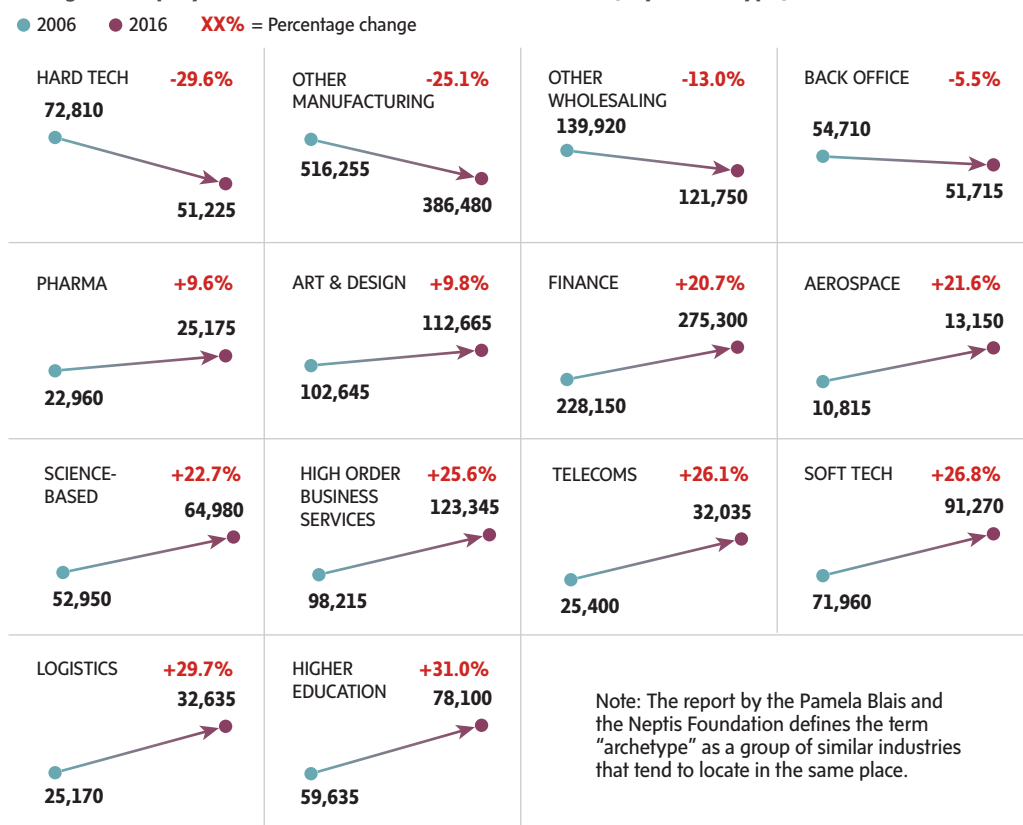
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Change in core employment, downtown Toronto vs. all megazones



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Change in employment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, by "archetype," 2006 vs. 2016



Note: The report by the Pamela Blais and the Neptis Foundation defines the term "archetype" as a group of similar industries that tend to locate in the same place.

MURAT YÜKSELIR / THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: THE NEPTIS FOUNDATION

School of Economics, said in an interview. "It's not this kind of gentle evolution towards the knowledge economy that's we've seen previously. This is a definite shift."

The GM news appears tailor-made to illustrate that shift. While closing the Oshawa plant, the company has pointed to its new investment in Markham — one of a handful of suburban centres for knowledge jobs identified in the report — where GM plans to hire 700 engineers to work on its designs for driverless cars. GM has also announced plans for an "urban

innovation lab" on the east side of central Toronto.

But Dr. Blais's numbers show downtown Toronto is even far outpacing other, more suburban areas where new knowledge-intensive "core" jobs had been growing in the past, such as Markham, Vaughan and the area around Pearson International Airport, which her report refers to as employment "megazones." Core job growth was also weaker in Toronto's own inner suburbs.

For Toronto, the blessing of all these new jobs may also be a

curse, as the city struggles to expand its public-transit system to keep up. Dr. Blais's report suggests the Toronto region should look to plan for a "second downtown," which would need good transit to attract knowledge-intensive jobs and complement Toronto's now-bustling centre.

Toronto's chief planner, Gregg Lintern, says while creating a second downtown might make sense for the region, his department's recent TOcore plan for the downtown aims to accommodate as many as 300,000 new jobs down-

town by 2041. The idea is to spread some of those new jobs to the east — where the site of a former Unilever soap factory is set to become a transit-linked hub home to 50,000 jobs — and to the west.

But new transit lines are crucial to make it work, he says: "The geography is certainly there. You need to continue to build the infrastructure."

Given the pace of change found in her report, Dr. Blais warns that projections for jobs across the rest of the Greater Golden Horseshoe are likely to be way off. Places such as Oshawa, she says, still need to attract some new knowledge jobs, even though they tend to cluster near transit links rather than in office parks surrounded by parking lots. The study also contains other bad news for places outside Toronto's downtown. A higher proportion of jobs in those regions now are vulnerable to disruption from both international trade and from automation. And vulnerability to automation is not something limited to manufacturing: "Back office" or clerical work is also in decline.

Richard Florida, head of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, said the numbers demonstrate the clustering of knowledge jobs means places outside Toronto's downtown core, such as Oshawa, will inevitably become "more of a bedroom community than an economic generator."

However, the growth downtown is also at risk, he argues, as decades of underinvestment in public transit make it increasingly difficult for the city to keep pace: "We believe somehow that we can keep cutting our taxes and not raising our taxes. ... But we can't. Being a big city, it costs money."

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Protesters voice concerns about York school board trustee-elect at swearing-in

VICTORIA GIBSON

Protesters disrupted the swearing-in of the York Region District School Board on Monday night in a backlash against a trustee-elect accused of making racist remarks during her campaign.

"Please don't sit idly by while this racist is sworn in," activist Desmond Cole urged, asking anyone concerned about trustee-elect Elizabeth Terrell-Tracey to join protesters. Local media reported during the fall election campaign that Ms. Terrell-Tracey made comments on Facebook about opponent Lena Singh's Guyanese heritage, saying voters needed a trustee who was born in Canada. The trustee-elect later told local media her Facebook had been hacked.

Ms. Terrell-Tracey was elected trustee for East Gwillimbury and Whitchurch-Stouffville with 9,344 votes to Ms. Singh's 5,788. Many of the approximately 20 protesters on Monday evening held up Guyanese flags, made emotional pleas for her resignation and urged the members of the public who were there to push for policy changes in the board.

"This board has a history of having racist trustees on their board, and we're going to stand for it no more," parent Charline Grant told the people in attendance, many of whom stayed after the trustee-elects were hurried off to another location to continue taking their oaths. Ms. Grant was involved in another high-profile case involving racially charged language last year, involving then-York Region trustee Nancy Elgie.

Ms. Elgie was overheard using a racial slur to describe a black parent in conversation with another trustee. Ms. Grant said she was the parent. Ms. Elgie resigned in February after months of calls to step down, including one from the provincial education minister. In a video posted to YouTube, she said she had made a "terrible mistake," and had suffered a concussion, a common symptom of which is mixed-up words. She said she apologized right away to her co-trustee, but that part was not heard.

At the outset of the swearing-in ceremony, education director Louise Sirisko had said she understood that people might be experiencing hurt, concern and, in some cases, "extraordinary anger." She noted if the swearing-in could not proceed, she would call a recess, move the trustees and livestream the event. The livestream audio was cut off as protesters gave speeches in the auditorium.

The board said in a news release about Monday's events that it does not have "legal authority" to remove an elected official from office, and that accountability measures such as its code of conduct apply only after someone is sworn in. Protesters handed out pamphlets on Monday evening urging constituents to write to the Ontario Ombudsman asking him to lobby the Ministry of Education to include trustee-elects in that code.

The board and new trustees returned to the auditorium after the private swearing-in for a special meeting called to hear concerns about "the trustee-elect for East Gwillimbury and Whitchurch-Stouffville."

With a report from The Canadian Press