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OPINION / Editorials

The Star's View: If there's an auto strategy, why can't we find it?



Flavio Volpe, president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association, told those attending a chamber luncheon at the Ciociaro Club that Ontario and Canada need an auto strategy. (TYLER BROWNBRIDGE/The Windsor Star)

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Star Editorials

Nov 20, 2014 - 7:00 PM EST

Last Updated: Nov 20, 2014 - 7:07 PM EST

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If the federal and provincial governments have an auto strategy — and they both insist they do — why do so many people keep calling for one?

In 2012 the CAW urged Ottawa to come up with an auto strategy after GM closed a line in Oshawa and 2,000 assembly jobs disappeared. Unifor made the same pitch again last month after revealing Windsor didn't even come close to making the short list for Ford's new engine plant.

Matt Marchard, president of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, is leading a national campaign to get government to provide more incentives to lure business to this country, and that includes creating an auto strategy.

The Canadian Automotive Partnership Council has uttered the same plaintive cry and, just days after Brad Duguid, minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, insisted Ontario has everything under control, the head of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association said — wait for it — that we need an auto strategy.

“It's very difficult to be successful if we're simply reacting to those opportunities while our competition proactively creates them and drives them,” Flavio Volpe, president of the APMA, told a gathering at the Ciociaro Club on Wednesday.

To which many in attendance likely nodded their heads in agreement and replied: “Ya think?” Surely all these intelligent, well-versed community leaders from coast to coast can't be wrong. Or crazy. Or missing something.

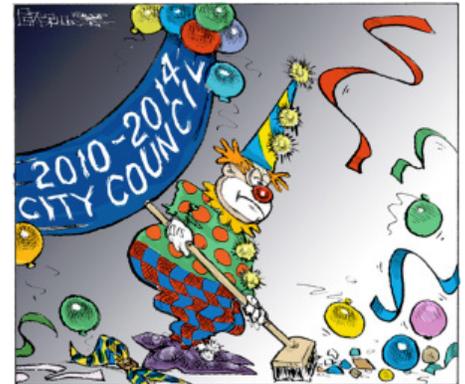
Of course they aren't. The only ones missing the fact that such a strategy is desperately needed are the ones ultimately tasked with making it happen.

Duguid, for instance, appeared indignant that anyone would say Ontario's plan doesn't work, saying in a letter to the editor that the province is “investing in strategic partnerships while building an attractive climate for investment.”

He didn't, however, provide any details, and the lack of auto investment over the past four years would suggest not all partnerships are strategic, and the investment climate is not attractive to all.

Graston

Mike Graston's Colour Cartoon For Thursday, November 20, 2014



Mike Graston's Colour Cartoon For Saturday, November 15, 2014



Mike Graston's Colour Cartoon For Friday, November 14, 2014

Government won't succeed at winning and growing this important sector unless those at the highest levels realize that having an auto "department," like the feds, and a "unit," like Queen's Park, are no substitute for a dedicated auto strategy office headed by someone who knows how to make it work.

That person should be looking years into the future and mapping out a plan, not trying to initiate a conversation after an auto company has already made its decision. It's too little, too late.

Governments come up with all kinds of excuses as to why auto companies go elsewhere. Just admit you're a huge part of the current problem and create — drum roll please — a bloody auto strategy.

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