Business buzz: March 29

By Hank Daniszewski, The London Free Press
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Jim Wilson, left, his son Trevor and dad Ray Wilson in the Wilson Transmission shop on Falcon Street. The business has operated nearly 40 years. (Mike Hensen/The London Free Press)

Three generations

Transmissions are one of the most complex and expensive auto components to repair or replace.

Wilson Transmission, a three-generation family business, has been helping London vehicle owners for almost 40 years.

Jim Wilson works alongside his 82-year-old father Ray and 37-year-old son Trevor in the shop at 123 Falcon St.

Jim Wilson said transmissions have become more difficult to fix or rebuild over the years because of changes in manufacturing.

"We've become a throw-away industry. Back in the '80s, sealed units were manufactured for the first time, however, we were able to take them apart to switch out parts, saving our customers hundreds of dollars."

Wilson followed in his father's footsteps starting as an apprentice transmission specialist in 1973. Five years later he bought the franchise he had been working for and eventually owned four franchises in London and Woodstock.

In 2009, he went independent and moved the shop to its current location.

Wilson and his team use diagnostic testing capabilities to determine if a vehicle needs a minor repair, component replacement or a rebuilt transmission.

Wilson Transmission has been nominated for the Integrity Award from Better Business Bureau of Western Ontario.

Wilson said getting into a transmission unit is one thing, but finding replacement parts can be even tougher.

Many parts are no longer available for repairs so each unit must be replaced.

Licensing agreements are set that specify parts can only be sold to automotive manufacturers.

"What may have cost $40 for a bearing part now costs $1,300 or more for the entire unit and there's simply no way around it," Wilson said. "This industry could become obsolete within the next decade."