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IN INDUSTRY

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IN ACTION

5

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manufacturing  
success in Niagara



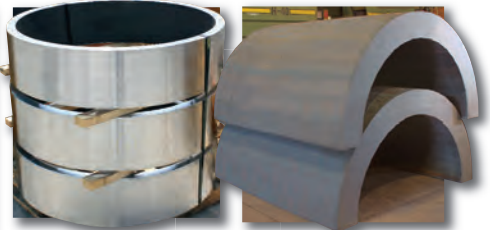


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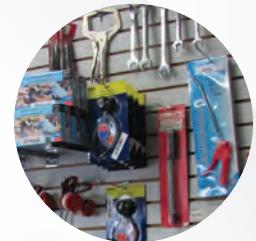
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WHY I SIT ON THE  
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# WELCOME

## TO ENGAGED IN INDUSTRY

**O**n behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to welcome you to the second edition of the Niagara Industrial Association's magazine, Engaged in Industry. This publication gives us the opportunity to celebrate the industrial machine that Niagara is and always has been. When we look at Niagara's rich history of industry and manufacturing and the partners that support them, we see that Niagara has always been a leader in creating supply to meet the world's demands. From this, our present Niagara is again becoming well known as the home of talent, knowledge, resources and skills that are increasingly being recognized as invaluable by world governments, educational and industrial leaders.



The NIA has been recognized as a strong partner and a strong voice representing an important economic force in Niagara. It is through our strong partners, who have asked for our voice, that we can truly measure ourselves. Throughout this year, the NIA has been asked to be the voice of our members on important issues raised by our provincial, regional and municipal leaders, our proud chambers of commerce, our local educational institutions and other important associations throughout Niagara.

The NIA has been asked for input on intermodal transportation, as Niagara holds a critical location for world trade. We have been asked to share our understanding and advice with respect to the skilled trades shortage and how our members and our association are addressing this critical issue. The NIA has sat at the table to discuss international and cross border trade, trade tariffs, available employment land, local governance and educational direction.

The NIA can build a greater, stronger Niagara through important relationships and strategic partnerships here and outside Niagara. In doing so, we hope to help shape a strong and sustainable economic base, through a vibrant and multi resourceful community, with a proud and talented workforce and social leadership that will bring good families to Niagara and keep our precious ones here.

As the chair of the NIA, I am proud to be a part of the future of Niagara as I know all of our members are. I am extremely proud to offer this magazine and through its stories and pages I hope you gain insight into the power of Niagara Industry and the important businesses that support them. I feel a publication of this calibre speaks volumes to the simple fact that industry in Niagara is alive and thriving in innovation, talent and traditional industrial knowledge. Welcome to Niagara Industry!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aaron Tisdelle".

Aaron Tisdelle  
Chair, NIA Board of Directors



# CELEBRATING THE FABRIC OF NIAGARA

**M**anufacturers across Niagara are marking many milestones in 2019, and their depth and breadth is truly inspiring.

Some are major projects transforming businesses in the region. Handling Specialty is among many examples of this trend. Currently, it's collaborating with a new Brilliant Factory operation in Welland, which makes large-scale reciprocating gas engines. Handling's expertise is woven into the manufacturing there through massive, complex moving equipment developed for the factory.

Other firms are benefiting from successful public sector funding applications in areas like federal funding and tax credits for innovative research-and-development that boosts business sales. Still other companies have deemed it worthwhile to install game-changing manufacturing installations like all-inclusive robotic CNC machines and state-of-the-art 3D engineering and design systems.

Realizing students and apprentices are our future, businesses like Vykan are taking a lead in promoting and sponsoring specialized robotics competitions for young people. A surge of initiatives by Niagara industry and its partners are encouraging a new generation to join the well-paying and rewarding manufacturing trades here.

That Niagara's industrial sector has thrived through relentless quality improvement, specialization, superior marketing and strategic alliances is evident in anniversary milestones showcasing increased longevity in the region. Among them is Factory Surplus Direct, marking their first decade, and Grimsby modular-structure builder NRB, which is celebrating 40 years.

Taken together, these milestones represent an industry in rapid turnaround mode, years after bouncing back from painful losses in heavy manufacturing. It's a collective sign of a new reality, and an even brighter future ahead! Here are some of their stories.

**LOOK FOR THESE ICONS IN OUR FEATURED STORIES, SHOWCASING HOW NIAGARA MANUFACTURERS ARE SUCCEEDING IN 2019.**



## MAJOR PROJECTS

Big initiatives, significant product launches can seem daunting, but they are often the lifeblood to a company's further growth and even renewal. Intelligent, strategic planning and execution make all the difference.



## FUNDING SUCCESSES

Access to funding for an industrial firm can come from a myriad of sources— from public-sector governments, to post-secondary institutions, banks and angel investors. When used strategically as business builders, they can serve as company milestones and support future growth.



## TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Purchasing and installing significant, cutting-edge machinery and industrial processes can be a major investment, requiring real commitment. It can also make firms much more competitive and productive and even push down costs in the long run.



## LABOUR FORCE SOLUTIONS

A superior labour force is the cornerstone of any successful enterprise, especially manufacturing. But it hasn't always been easy convincing young people and their parents to enter trades. That new wave of workers is the lifeblood of our industry, with ongoing efforts being made to energize our current and emerging industrial workforce.



## MILESTONES

Continuing to survive and thrive is the proof-of-the pudding for success in industry. The longer-lived firms have weathered downturns, huge market changes and skilfully recognized opportunity along the way.





# Funding infusion helps Dilts Piston with game-changing winch upgrade

Written by Don Fraser

**A** Niagara hydraulics systems company is engineering a new software tool that promises to cinch future business, thanks to a federal innovation grant.

The Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP) funding was awarded to Dilts Piston Hydraulics of St. Catharines. IRAP is a government innovation-assistance program to help small and medium-sized businesses develop and commercialize technologies.

That National Research Council Canada support means Dilts now has a control package for its Collomatic 2.0. Winch — a self-tensioning, electro-hydraulic mooring winch system made by the firm and used by its marine-industry customers.

“This is going to take our winches to the next level,” said Dilts’ president Ian Hill.

Before, when customers bought a winch from them, that was all they got. If occasional trouble arose during operation, they called Dilts and employees swiftly handled it. “This is really going to ramp-up our winch maintenance and programming. It’s taking the control package to a much higher level,” he said of Collomatic’s programmable logic control (PLC) feature.

“It offers red-flag tracking, data-logging, telemetry, wireless feedback and communication — that will allow us to provide our customers with an individualized service-schedule.”

The data-logging option in the Collomatic control package is a bonus missing from many PLC machine packages, and a milestone for the firm.

“The IRAP funding is helping us produce a controller we can

be proud of in 2019,” Hill said, adding the grant was \$99,000 for the engineering project (worth approximately \$150,000).

Dilts has been around for three decades and has 18 staff, with its focus on hydraulics-system sales and repairs. Specialties also include industrial millwrighting services, agricultural fluid power repair, marine mooring-winch building and repair and cylinder manufacturing, pump-and-motor repair, valve repair, steering and ballast and cargo-unloading system repair and sales.

While it has industrial and agricultural customers, much of Dilts’ business flows from the marine industry. The shop’s talent folds in machinists, millwrights, machine repair workers, hydraulic technicians, pipe fitters, crane operators and others. It also has a small machine shop popular for one-off type services and a fabrication shop with services such as arc, mig-and-tig welding, and plasma cutting.

This newest control package offers a compelling feature to add to the service mix, Hill said. “Once we have this engineered, tested, and we’re happy with our winch, it has the capability to expand into any commercial machine-operating control package.

“That’s one of the directions we plan on this project taking the company into its future.” ■

*Dilts Piston Hydraulics’ Collomatic 2.0 Winch being tested prior to shipping to the customer in Wisconsin.*







*North America Traffic's dedicated and hard working shop staff pride themselves on quality*

# Funding green-lights innovation for Port Colborne manufacturer

*Written by Don Fraser*

**B**usiness success derives from many sources: bold entrepreneurship, a push for quality and service, superior marketing and a creative team.

A little help from your friends also makes a difference.

For Port Colborne's North America Traffic — a leading manufacturer of portable traffic control equipment — those allies include two federal funding sources for innovation.

One is the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP) from the National Research Council Canada, a program that helps small and medium-sized businesses bring niche technologies to commercial life.

Another, is the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SRED) Tax Incentive Program, sometimes known as 'Shred', which incentivizes productive research and development.

"Our products are quite specialized and customized," said Jordan Sherlock, the company's president. "So, we need to meet the demands of specific market applications. Product development and R&D is the name of the game for us."

Funding through successful applications, whether given directly or in tax credits, allows North America Traffic to do "job shop" work that incorporates critical feedback on what clients need for equipment.

"These programs want to encourage small businesses like us to invest in innovation, in product and research development. Essentially, they pick your brain and fund strategically on what is needed to make it happen," Sherlock said, adding a recent IRAP funding project provided \$40,000 to his firm.

His recipient company is a pioneer in the development of trailer mounted, battery powered, solar assisted traffic control systems for temporary installations, notably road and bridge construction sites where two lanes of traffic have to be merged into one.

Its product line includes portable equipment for short and long-term applications, such as flagger lights, automated flagger assistance devices, portable lane control signals and temporary traffic signals.

The weather-hardy, cost-effective equipment is used for bridge repair, highway reconstruction, emergencies, or flagging operations, where safety for on-site workers and motorists is an ongoing concern.

*Jordan Sherlock,  
President, North America  
Traffic*





## Local contact for the Industrial Research Assistance Program:

### Hugh Scholaert

*Industrial Technology Advisor,  
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National Research Council Canada  
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of Business)*

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typically carrying on for years, as compared to the sunk-cost of continually hiring temporary labour, or detouring a road."

Another related factor is addressing labour shortages and helping backfill that issue, for contractors dealing with that during the bidding process.

North America Traffic does almost all design and manufacturing in-house, has about 25-30 employees at any time, and consistent, steady revenue growth. The firm's customer base covers Canada and the U.S., and typical distributors of its products and systems are traffic control companies and equipment rental stores.

Sherlock offers that the funding which has helped his business may make sense for other Niagara Industrial Association members in manufacturing.

"Even speaking only about our IRAP funding experience, it has steadily become easier, with less red tape interference. We also have an excellent local representative who is beyond helpful," he said. "He makes a real effort to understand what you need to do and structure proposed projects accordingly.

"The process is much more streamlined than it used to be, and I no longer view it as a no-value burden." ■

"To a real degree, we have cornered a specific market," said Sherlock.

"Item 1 in what we do is safety; getting flaggers and workers out of harm's way and off the road. The other is the cost-effectiveness — with return on investment

ADVERTORIAL

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The Niagara-Hamilton region is an essential trade gateway that is well positioned to take advantage of Ontario's maritime opportunity. The Niagara-Hamilton trade corridor is strategically located within a day's drive of major Canadian and U.S. cities, with access to 10,000 km of Great Lakes shoreline that connects the region to any market around the world. Connect with us to grow your business in the Niagara-Hamilton trade corridor.



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# FTZ made easy – Niagara businesses can achieve a competitive edge

In 2016, the federal government designated the Niagara Region as a Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) Point. At the time it was the first such zone established in Ontario. Today, it is one of nine areas across Canada with official FTZ designation.

Fort Erie has been designated the storefront location for the Niagara FTZ. The Niagara FTZ serves to promote Niagara as a hub for international trade, help businesses integrate into foreign markets and global value chains, support business expansion into new markets and provide streamlined information on the Government of Canada's tax and tariff export-related programs.

## FTZ BENEFITS *for* BUSINESS



## The Niagara FTZ is a single point of access to the following FTZ programs

### Duties Relief Program

For businesses who import goods in Canada that are either stored, processed or used to create other goods before re-exporting them. *This program can save customs duties on those goods.*

### Drawback Program

For businesses who import goods that are later re-exported or if businesses use them in the manufacture of other goods that are exported. *This program allows businesses to apply for a refund of customs duties on exported goods.*

### Custom Bonded Warehouse Program

For businesses who store imported or domestic goods destined for export in a private or public customs bonded warehouse for up to 4 years. *This program can save customs and other import duties and taxes, including GST.*

### Export Distribution Centre Program

For businesses who store or process imported goods and add limited value to them prior to re-export. *This program could save the GST/HST on imported goods and some domestic goods.*

### Exporters of Processing Services Program

For non-resident businesses that import goods for processing, distribution or storage that are subsequently exported. *This program could save the GST/HST on those goods.*



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# Manufacture Greater Success

As a manufacturer in the Canadian manufacturing industry, you must continually evolve to meet new operational, trade and regulatory changes. Your success depends on how well you manage a myriad of issues, including labour resource challenges, executing on leadership succession and mitigating cyber security exposure. In addition, you need to effectively manage your corporate and taxation structure to maximize firm value for potential merger and acquisition opportunities or divesture goals.

**Dealing with these challenges while working to improve your gross margins by reducing operating costs can be overwhelming. That's where MNP can help.**

MNP understands the space in which you do business: we work closely with manufacturers in the Niagara region, advising them on how to get the most from their operations by delivering leading-edge and innovative solutions to reduce operating costs and increase margins.

From finding the right financing and effectively growing to managing risks and increasing operation efficiencies through a lean business model, we're here to help you manufacture even greater success.

**Contact an MNP Advisor today to discuss your business challenges and goals.**



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**niagara**  
industrial association




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# ABATEMENT TECHNOLOGIES

## PASSIONATE ABOUT CLEAN AIR

**A**batement Technologies was founded in 1985 in Fort Erie, as a spinoff of Harber Manufacturing. Harber began operations in 1946 building aluminum furniture, and the company grew significantly over the decades with the popularity of its “HarberCraft” boats sold by several major retailers.

Abatement’s own launch took advantage of a boom in asbestos remediation projects in the 1980s, leveraging Harber’s expertise in fabricating water-tight boats into designing air-tight systems required to safely contain asbestos dust.

From there, Abatement Technologies developed and mastered technologies for clean air applications of all kinds. In fact, more than 10,000 environmental abatement, purification and construction projects have relied on products developed and built in the company’s Fort Erie facility.

Over the past couple decades, evolving demand in the healthcare sector has strengthened Abatement’s expertise considerably. Aging hospital infrastructure throughout North

America (the average hospital in Canada is around 50 years old) has led to a renovation boom. Because of intensive infection control measures during such renovations, equipment such as air scrubbers, HEPA vacuums, dust barriers and negative air machines is in high demand – and all are readily supplied by Abatement Technologies.

The company’s products are also often called into action to deal with major disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, where quick response is critical for mitigating potential mold damage. Abatement Technologies also manufactures mobile patient isolations units, ideal for quick response in epidemic management. Thousands have been deployed over the years, during some of the world’s most serious incidents including the 2003 SARS crisis, the 2013-16 Ebola epidemic in West Africa and the recent MERS outbreak in the Middle East.

Abatement Technologies is recognized in the industry for its commitment to innovation. One of its latest product lines was recently awarded for new product excellence by Contech, the leading construction industry trade organization in Quebec. AIRE GUARDIAN® SHIELD is a sturdy, modular containment system that enables contractors to set up a fully-contained barrier adaptable to all job sites.

To meet growing demand, Abatement Technologies recently invested in new state-of-the-art laser cutting equipment and renovated a nearby warehouse to incorporate additional office and manufacturing space. Between its two facilities in Fort Erie and its Harber Technologies division, the company now operates approximately 90,000 sq.ft. of space. Abatement also has a major distribution centre in Atlanta, as well as eight satellite warehouses across Canada.

The Harber Technologies division leverages Abatement’s metal laser cutting and fabrication capabilities to the benefit of manufacturers throughout Ontario. With full in-house 3D graphical CAD systems and services, fully automated production laser cutting, CNC turret punching, highly advanced multi-axis press brakes, and numerous other fabricating processes, Harber offers highly competitive solutions to manufacturing clients.



*Abatement Technologies' extensive product line: air scrubbers, purifiers, barrier systems, dehumidifiers and more*

7 HIGH STREET

ABATEMENT  
TECHNOLOGIES

## Harber Technologies

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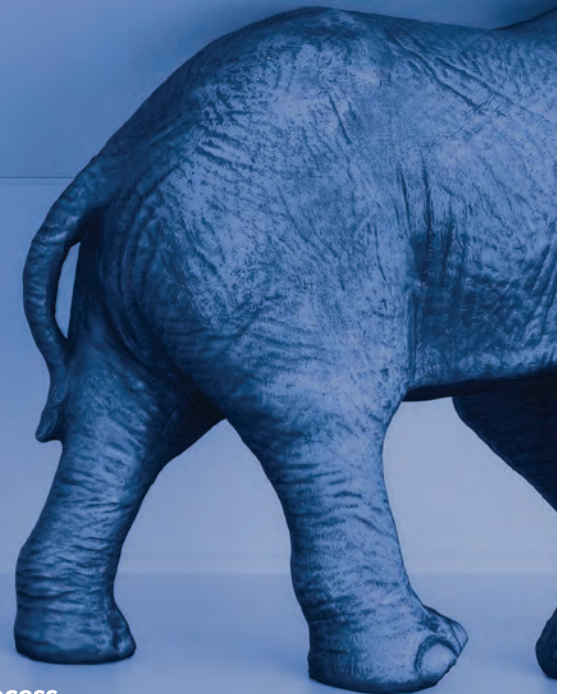
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# • BUILDING THE POWER TO TAKE CONTROL •

**CEM Engineering**, is a St. Catharines based thermal power engineering firm, specializing in cogeneration and energy management. Formed in 2001, working primarily with industrial customers, CEM specializes in helping clients achieve their environmental and energy goals.

**Stolk Construction's** mission is to make the lives of their clients easier. The Stolk team does this by being a solutions provider, offering management and labour services to BUILD, RENOVATE and MAINTAIN facilities. For nearly 60 years Stolk has focused on serving clients in industrial, commercial and institutional environments.

## Strength Of Relationship

The strategic partnership between CEM and Stolk was very much born out of two leaders with a great deal of respect for each other and for the organizations they lead, two forward thinking organizations founded on similar core values. The focus of both parties on their teams and their clients runs deep in their operations and is evident in their deliverables.

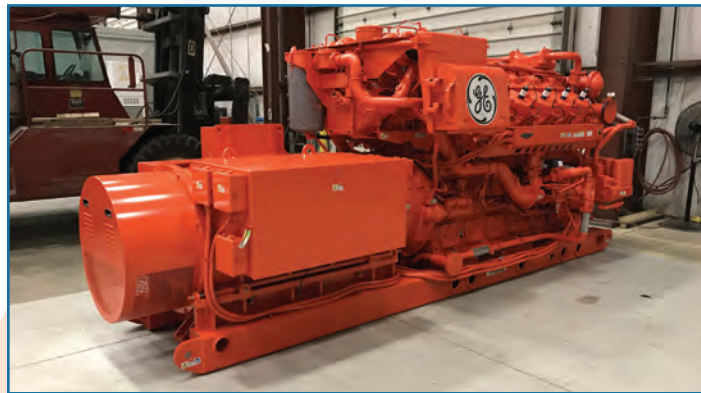
CEM's Chief Operating Officer, Matt Lensink and Stolk Construction's President, Len Stolk initially met through a Peer Advisory Group formed by mutual Business Coach, Verne Milot of Growth Associates. A year after their initial introduction, the CEM team created an EPC (Engineer, Procure, Construct) arm of their company, fittingly called CEM Projects. CEM hadn't always had the easiest time managing contractors and Matt approached Len to discuss the opportunity to work together. Matt was cognizant of how much experience Stolk had in the industrial sector and was optimistic that this, coupled with a confidence in the abilities of each other's teams would be the foundation of a strong partnership.



## The Road Ahead - Building The Power To Take Control

Today the CEM Projects and Stolk Construction teams are able to look back at two successfully run EPC projects with affirmation that this partnership was a great strategic decision. Key to success has been an open, honest relationship, focused on continuous improvement.

Energy challenges are the reality of many organizations who want to keep making their products and operating their facilities. Together CEM Projects and Stolk Construction will continue to deliver a solution that allows their clients to be hands off, and in a more efficient means than two firms working in silos. Gone is the need to purchase equipment, engage contractors and so on. Instead the two teams provide peace of mind that together they can build the power for the client, who in turn can take control of their energy needs.



*Kirkland Lake 2.2 MWe Combined Heat and Power Project  
built by CEM Projects and Stolk Construction in 2018.*



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# ABSOLUTE CHANGE MANAGEMENT

## CHANGE IS GOOD

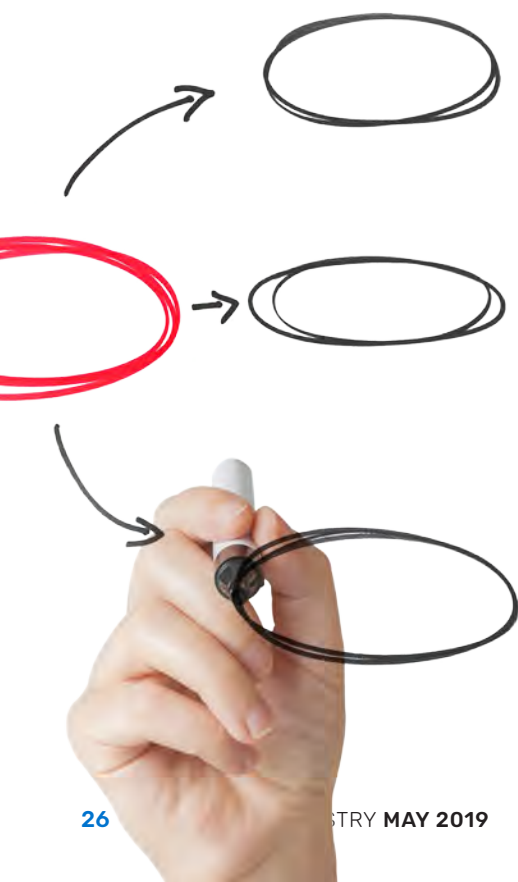
**A**bsolute Change Management (ACM) helps organizations unleash the untapped potential of their people. We recognize there are people everywhere, everyday that want to excel and for whatever reasons are not able to. Our job is to help figure out what's getting in the way and clear the clutter.

At ACM we are passionate about helping companies reach their full potential each day, by engaging their employees, developing their skills and focusing them on their core values. Connecting to core values such as Reason Opportunity Respect brings positive tangible change which results in increased success



for our clients and their businesses. Through this engaging culture shift ACM helps foster an environment of continuous improvement that lasts long after our team has left.

With a strong knit team of wide-ranging expertise and skills, ACM analyzes the current state of a client's business using data, observations, company history, and communications with employees. This analysis empowers our clients to articulate their vision of the future. Over the past 20 years, ACM has focused on making things make sense from planning through to execution. Using tools such as Lean production methodologies



## THE 5S SYSTEM

**Sort**  
Remove items that are unnecessary, ensure necessary items are located at the work site

**Sustain**  
Ensure the 5S initiative takes root in the culture of the organization



**Set-in Order**  
Arrange items for easy and efficient access at their point of use

**Shine**  
Clean everything inside and out to restore original conditions, use cleaning as an inspection tool

**Standardize**  
Create obvious guidelines and benchmarks for everyone to maintain



**As part of the management team at Thorold Auto Parts and Recycling, we recognized that to remain competitive in an ever expanding and vast world market, we not only had to introduce an aggressive culture change, but also a concerted effort to streamline and raise productivity within our Company environment. With this in mind, Dave Peters and his outstanding team at ACM were able to help refine what we had already put in place by using exciting and aggressive techniques aimed at not only helping promote a better work experience for our staff, but to also produce consistently higher numbers for the Company. I can speak on behalf of our business that we would highly recommend ACM to any company who is need of positive change going forward."**

*Frank Breton, AGM*

*Thorold Auto Parts and Recycling*



and problem-solving techniques we help build a framework to remove stress, freeing people to drive innovative improvements. Clients find that their people work more efficiently, create better workflows, eliminate waste, develop a strong sense of satisfaction and loyalty through daily successes.

ACM helps clients in a variety of industries identify opportunities and quantify change initiatives, as well as calculate risks and benefits. After carefully listening to the client's needs and goals, ACM provides them with analysis and ties changes to specific KPI's when creating the best program to suit their needs. This may include competency-based personal assessments, communication training, Rapid Fire RCA, 5S workplace organization, knowledge management and more. One of ACM's differentiators is proximity to the client as we work in their business, not ours. We build a close relationship with our clients and ensure that we leave them more successful as a result of working with us. It's in this friendly, safe and positive atmosphere that our clients experience greater success than ever before.

Part of ACM's work is to help clients shift direction and progress rapidly towards their future vision. Like a sailboat that must adjust course to take advantage of favourable conditions, ACM helps your leadership set the team on course and harnesses their energy to build momentum that makes change rapid and

sustainable. Clients are able to solve complex problems simply by thinking and acting differently. Our clients know there are always opportunities to improve and we help them leverage those opportunities. ACM makes the journey fun with a flexible customized approach that reflects our clients needs, not some 'one-size-fits-all' package.





# 2018

# NIA

# TRADESHOW

*Part of the NIA's business development strategy in 2018 included a tradeshow in February, which provided a forum for NIA members, local dignitaries, and guests from outside the Region to network, and experience some of the success stories and current events taking place in our own backyard.*



## **The day was a win, and featured the following highlights:**

- + Luncheon keynote speakers – Elyse Allan (President and CEO, GE Canada), and Peter Hall (Vice President and Chief Economist, EDC)
- + 59 expo booths
- + 26 political dignitaries from all levels of government in attendance

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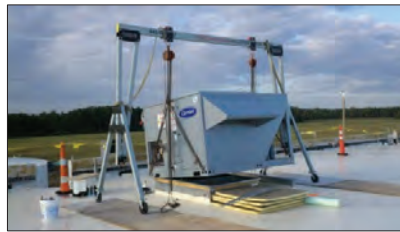


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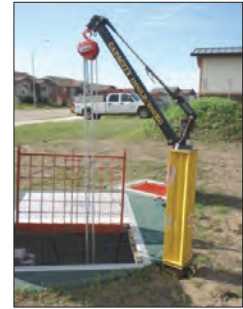
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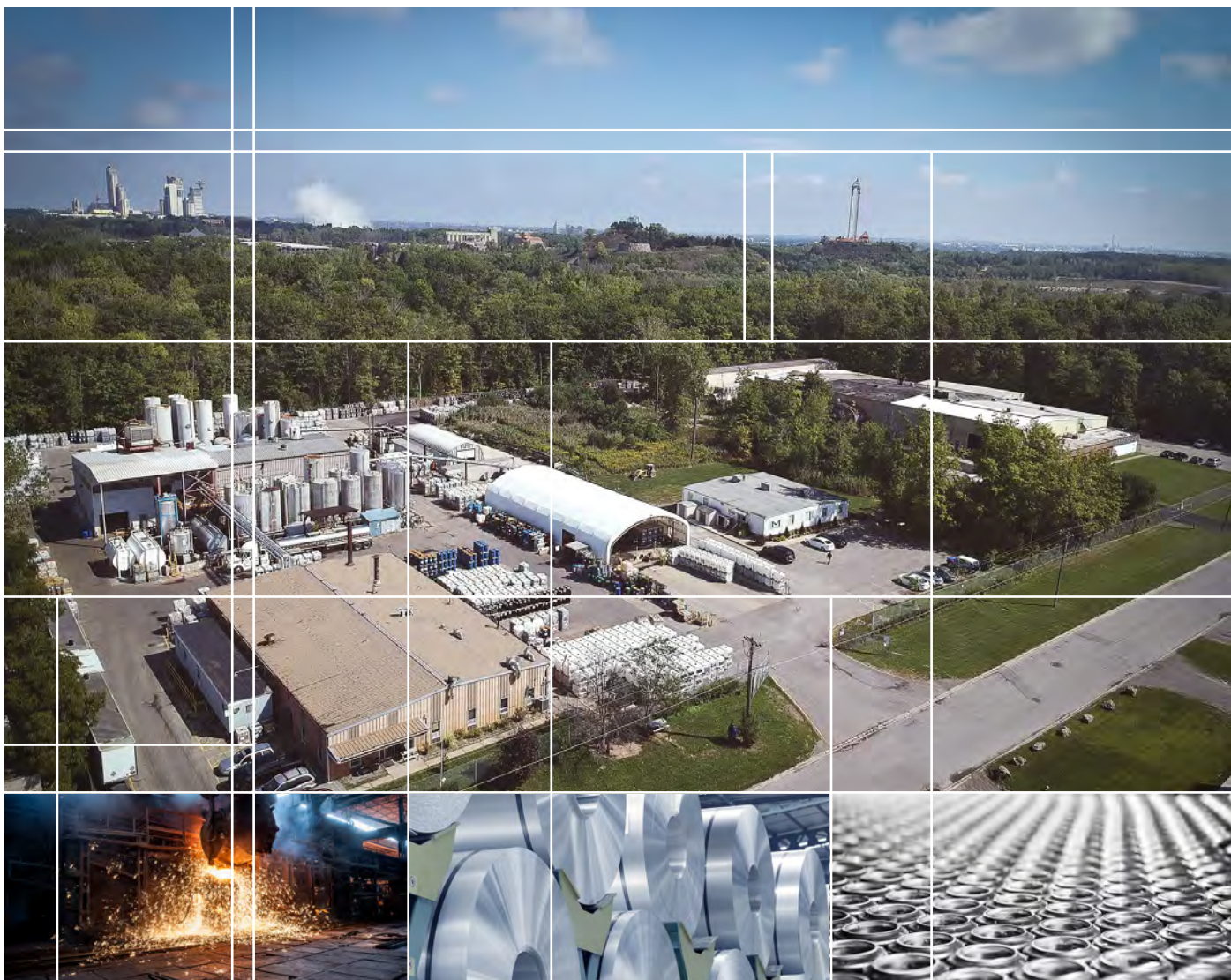


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Paul Lennox, President and Peter Gustavson CEO founded EncoreFX to cater to small and medium-size businesses.

"Businesses are confident that we will keep them informed of what they need to know to make smart decisions," says Lennox.

Today, EncoreFX has 2,000 clients across Canada, with 600 more through offices in Australia and New Zealand. This year, EncoreFX is expanding into the U.S.

Lennox says, "EncoreFX is a bit old school; we believe in bricks and mortar. That's key to building the individual, personal relationships that EncoreFX's team of dealers and business professionals have with their clients."

**"We're here to do business differently."**







*First year team from the 2018 Districts  
at Ryerson University*

# Precision waterjet company houses robotics program for a new STEM generation

*Written by Don Fraser*

**C**ustom precision-cutter Vykan has opened its shop to new generations of students who are building a base for future manufacturing skills in Niagara.

Vykan is the home of Niagara Robotics, which folds in students and mentors seeking to train in robotics to compete in the well-regarded FIRST Robotics — competitions that begin locally and progress to world championships.

“With this robotics program, the kids are really learning the STEM skills; science, technology, engineering and math,” said Vykan co-partner Kevin Erb. “It all comes together to build a robot for an eight-week competition period.

“It teaches the kids manufacturing, builds up their knowledge and really helps them to become leaders.”

The programs at Vykan cover a range of ages, including a Lego League one (Grades 4-8) and the high school program from Grades 8-12.

Students have access to the shop, including mills, lathes, CNC waterjet, powder coating and a 3D printer in a 1,200-square-foot space within Vykan. The young creators are also involved in community outreach to promote what they do.

The cost to run the [www.niagararobotics.com](http://www.niagararobotics.com) program is about \$30,000, to \$40,000, with major sponsors involved, and an enrolment fee from \$200 to \$400.

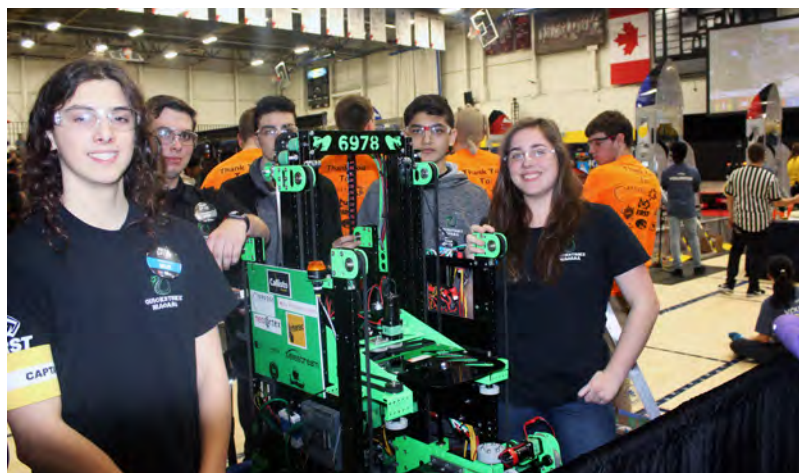
Vykan, based in Niagara-on-the-Lake near the Garden City Skyway, has been in operation for two years and does mainly parts manufacturing and other fabrication jobs.

Its focus is on waterjet and abrasive waterjet cutting, which uses high-pressure water at 50,000 PSI and in a cold cutting process. It allows for the machine to cut thicker materials without heating up and distorting the final product.

About the only thing it can't cut to specification, is tempered glass and it also works with designers, architects and even artists. The shop also complements work done in other machine shops.

For its robotics team, Vykan has ten students across Niagara this year, with the last group competing for the first time in Mississauga in 2018. In designing the actual robot, they work in areas that include programming, electrical engineering, hands-on building, specialized machining and the use of power tools. Points are acquired through regional competitions, and at the provincial matchup, robotics teams are put through challenges like having a robot snatch up a ball or Velcro disk. Teams also compete to prevent a competitor from completing that task.

“I was one of the coaches last year,” said Erb. “And the atmosphere in these competitions is pretty electric, there's some great teamwork involved and a lot of intensity. Everyone also shows a really gracious professionalism.” ■



*Drive team pictured with 2019 competition robot at Humber  
College Districts competition*



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A large industrial machine, likely a lathe or mill, is shown in a factory setting. The machine is made of heavy metal and has a large, cylindrical workpiece being machined. A worker in a red cap and purple shirt is visible in the background, working on the machine. The scene is lit with warm, industrial lights.

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## Re-designing safety and comfort when needed

*Continuing the tradition of a woman-owned Niagara firm thriving in the Niagara Region*

Written by Don Fraser

**“You simply have to know the front and back of the business to operate it properly.”**

Lyse Moreau's mother Claudette was the founder of International Sew Right, which opened in 1983 on Ontario Street in the north end of St. Catharines. A few years later, ISR relocated to its current site at Don Murie Street in Niagara Falls.

Lyse began working at International Sew in the 1980s. In 2001 Lyse became partners with her mother and began making positive changes to get International Sew Right ready to export. In 2011 Lyse's was a 100% women-owned manufacturing facility.

An employee once gave Lyse a word of advice: “You simply have to know the front and back of the business to operate it properly.” They were words of wisdom Lyse took to heart, as she was planning the growth of International Sew Right.

“Mom had the vision and passed it on to me,” said Lyse. “I merely expanded on it.” Mom made herself an expert on what her company makes, and how they make it and I worked hard to keep up with the times and create new innovations.”

The facility —located in the industrial park near Chippawa— is semi-automated, with an array of sewing machines, presses, electrical cutting equipment, CAD department-cutting room.

A stroll through the ISR back room reveals seamstresses using machines of many varieties, from single and double-needles to five-thread sergers, snap-inserting machines and featuring a CAD (computer-assisted design) machine that cuts-out intricate patterns.

"Opportunities always present themselves," Lyse said. She points to one example — a current order for ballistic blankets that use a type of Kevlar and is designed to stop ammunition fire and shrapnel.

Sew Right sells across Canada with a growing customer base in the U.S., with exports to Brazil and India and plans to branch into Mexico.

"I'm very proud of the team we have here, we love what we do and when it comes to designing something new, everyone is in on it."

During a recent trip to the city of Monterrey in northeast Mexico — part of a push by ISR to scope-out international markets there — she joined a group of delegates from the Organization of Women in International Trade. Top Canadian businesswomen were introduced to Mexican leads that could leverage exporting opportunities. It resulted in at least a couple of solid connections for ISR.

Lyse explained, walking through her 8,500 square-foot facility, which employs eight, that International Sew Right's core business over the years has been in custom-designing and manufacturing safety clothing, focusing on proximity suits, arc flash protection, high heat, fire-retardant and high-visibility clothing, coveralls, bib overalls, shop coats, aprons, sleeves, head protection, welders clothing and tarps, gloves, parkas, bomber jackets, and aprons well over 400 products.

International Sew Right is considered to be a Tier 1 & Tier 2 company internationally; with the ability to assist anyone with a safety concern. There is no limit to what they can do.

Business growth like this is always a top priority, and to that end, the ISR's membership in the Niagara Industrial Association has been helpful.

Since taking over, Lyse restructured operations in targeted ways that include upgrading the accounting and purchasing departments, automating cutting and sewing areas as well as redesigning the shipping and receiving departments. Employees at ISR have been key to crafting those changes. So has the Association.

"Niagara Industrial Association members are in some type of manufacturing, so we all know what we're going through, and we're all great at helping each other out," Lyse said. "All the help from the NIA saves us a lot of time and it is greatly appreciated."

It's a respectful and family-like environment in this way, Lyse said, adding her life-partner Doug Kitchen pitches in as needed and her son Charles who is in charge of sales and marketing has been a permanent addition since 2011 and on and off when Lyse needs help since 1993.

Office manager Suzanne Rose shares the sense of unity at ISR. "It's genuinely fun here, and it's different every day," she said. "We're really a good team— we work well together." ■

#### **In addition, the team has achieved:**

- 2004 Niagara Entrepreneur of the year Award
- 2014 Ontario Health and Safety Golden Award – Readers' Choice Award for Designing and Manufacturing Safety Apparel and Aluminized Clothing
- 2015 Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneur of the year
- 2015 Women's Distinguish Award for Achievements in the Industry







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# WHY THE NIAGARA INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION?

## BENEFITS TO MEMBERS

The Niagara Industrial Association (NIA) offers many unique benefits and opportunities to both manufacturing and service-oriented member companies. The following highlights some of the benefits the NIA has offered to-date.

## GROUP BENEFITS

Benefit Partners' **The BIG COMPANY Advantage** available to NIA member companies.

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

NIA has participated with Niagara economic development offices in an effort to investigate supply chain opportunities for NIA members:

- Partnered with Magnet Export Business Portal to provide export resources to NIA members
- Developed a Celebration of Industry Showcase to profile NIA members and demonstrate the strong capabilities and capacities available
- Produced the *Engaged in Industry* magazine to profile NIA members and the industrial sector in Niagara Region to broader audiences
- Represented and advocated for the interests of Niagara's industrial sector to the federal government, including for its Interim Report on Establishing a Canadian Transportation and Logistics Strategy



## ADVOCACY

- Led efforts to reverse the decision to end industrial waste pickup in Niagara Region
- Led efforts to reduce industrial development charges in Niagara Region to zero
- Niagara Foreign Trade Zone designation support to bring funding and other resources to market Niagara as an international trade hub
- Supported Niagara Gateway Economic Zone and Centre industrial development incentive program creation
- Supported various efforts to reduce industrial electricity rates for industrial users in Niagara
- Supported efforts to securing multi-millions in public funding to support various manufacturing initiatives and capacity building in Niagara such as the provincial investment to build the Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre at Niagara College, the federal investment to designate Niagara College a manufacturing Technology Access Centre, and federal funding to bring a productivity improvement program, Go Productivity, to Niagara manufacturers
- Participated in many targeted trade missions and business development opportunities in targeted industries and geographies
- Led efforts to work with local school boards and post-secondary institutions to ensure that students are informed in manufacturing career information and cooperative education opportunities

## RESOURCES

- Access to information and contacts related to manufacturing-specific business funding programs
- Access to NIA membership contacts and other manufacturing information
- Information and seminars on manufacturing best practices from fellow NIA members as well as subject matter experts
- Information on emerging legislation to prepare members for regulatory changes
- Access to supply chain opportunities presented to the NIA from members and opportunities outside of Niagara

## NETWORKING/ MARKETING

- Regular opportunities to network with fellow manufacturing companies, government and political representatives, and service providers at bi-monthly Membership Meetings, NIA Annual Golf Tournament, NIA Summer Social, Manufacturers' Breakfast, etc.
- Business profile on NIA online membership directory that heightens online presence as well as other business advertising opportunities
- Bi-monthly NIA member manufacturing plant tours to share information on company capabilities and best practices



# NIAGARA PENINSULA ENERGY INC.

## CELEBRATING NIAGARA'S CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS

by Ethan Fahey



Niagara Peninsula Energy Inc. (NPEI) provides local electricity distribution and related services to residential and business customers in the City of Niagara Falls, Town of Lincoln, Town of Pelham and Township of West Lincoln.

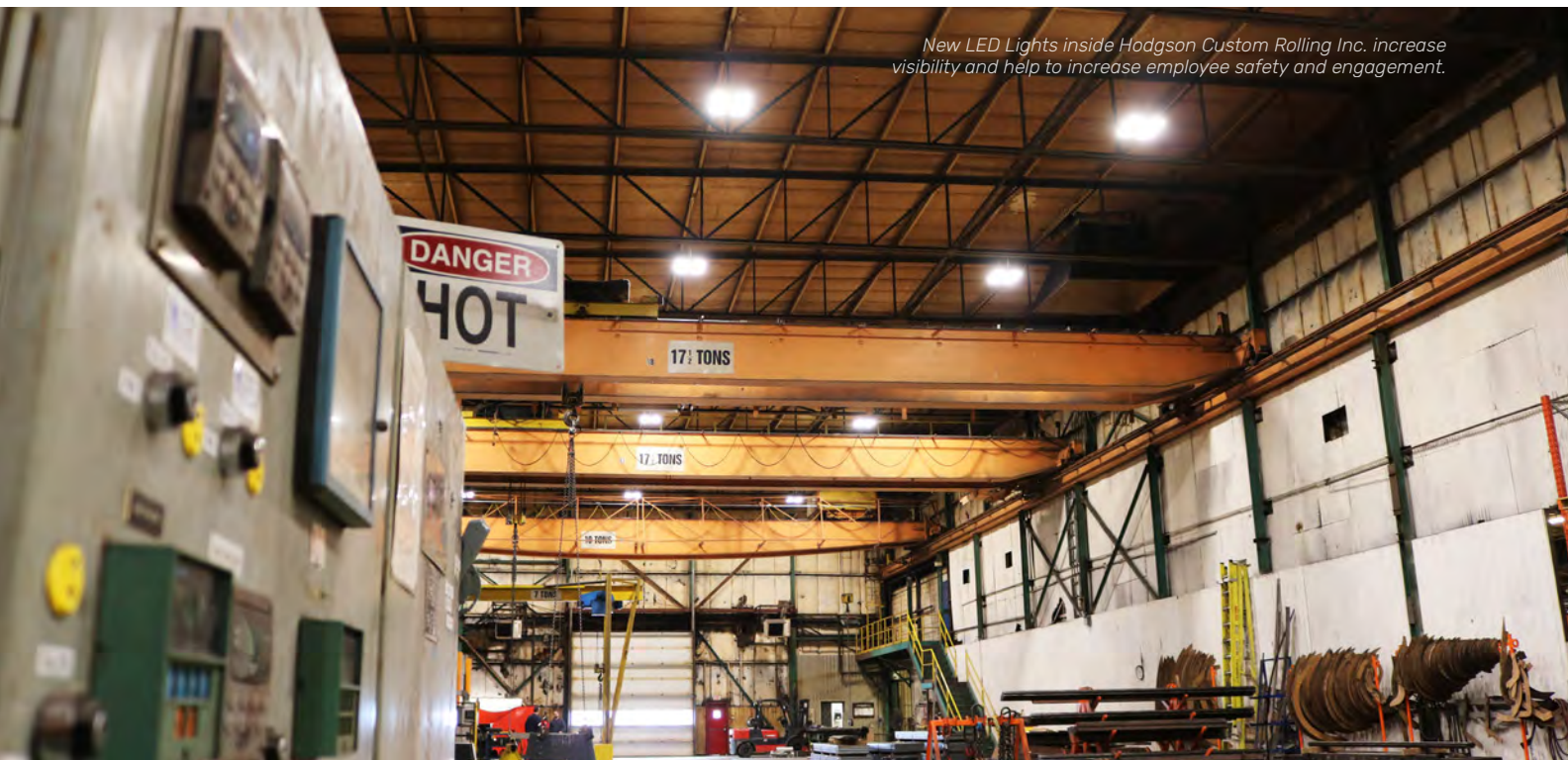
Over the last number of years, NPEI has helped many residences and businesses within their service territory achieve energy reduction through conservation. A number of programs were offered that provided incentives and energy-savings to businesses and residences that participated.

"Taking part in a program like this is just financially sensible," says Dave Kuzmich, VP, Engineering at Stanpac Manufacturing.

The company partnered with NPEI to replace a large number of lighting fixtures in their plant with high-efficiency LED lights, as well as to install a Power Kure unit to monitor the energy entering the plant. "That metering system allows us to see all power coming into the plant clearly and find out lots of information about the load," says Kuzmich.

After completing similar LED upgrades at Hodgson Custom Rolling, the plant is also brighter, and safer, according to owner Chris Hodgson. "The safety of our employees is at the forefront of our values", Hodgson says. "The lighting upgrade has been a great improvement, offering better visibility, increased efficiency and a much more reliable system." Hodgson says the company

*New LED Lights inside Hodgson Custom Rolling Inc. increase visibility and help to increase employee safety and engagement.*





**“After the upfront cost, those savings continue forever, year after year.”**

*Gino Carlozzi, Niagara Piston*

has always tried to be very environmentally responsible, and that the upgrades helped them to achieve that goal. “It was a very easy decision.”

Lighting is not the only upgrade that NPEI would assist businesses with. At both Moyer Diebel and Niagara Piston, after completing a number of lighting projects, the two companies also installed large air compressor units with variable speed drives (VSD). These VSDs allow the units to compress and store air more efficiently. An air compressor upgrade with a VSD produces a drastic savings which can help to put money back into the plant. “We’re able to take the money we save from doing a project and put it towards other equipment for the plant, which allows for future growth,” says Gary Robson, Buyer at Moyer Diebel.

Both Gino Carlozzi, Engineering Manager and Michael Garby, Maintenance Facilitator at Niagara Piston agree the upgrades help with the long-term prosperity of a company. “After the upfront cost, those savings continue forever, year after year,” says Carlozzi.

Having NPEI to walk companies through the upgrade process and assist with all aspects of completing an application was a main benefit to this partnership. “Having someone to help with



*Stanpac Manufacturing is enjoying their brighter workspace thanks to newly installed LED lights throughout the plant.*

paperwork and assist with submitting the application is a big bonus and helps take the pressure off of employees within the company,” says Carlozzi.

Due to recent changes in government policy, NPEI is no longer able to offer these province-wide incentive programs, however they remain committed to assisting customers with energy conservation, and local energy-efficiency programs may be offered in the future. NPEI would like to thank all businesses and residences that took part in these programs for their support and their partnership. Together we made a positive impact within our communities.



*Moyer Diebel is able to compress air and store it more efficiently thanks to their new Quincy Air Compressor unit that was installed.*





# Grimsby manufacturer does heavy lifting for Brilliant Factory

Written by Don Fraser

**L**everaging a lead that GE was poised to move its Waukesha operations to Canada proved to be a 'brilliant' move for Handling Specialty.

For decades, Handling Specialty had collaborated with GE in sectors that included the multinational's transportation and aerospace market.

"We knew of GE's intent to move those operations into Canada years before the announcement, but we didn't know back then it was going into Welland," said Handling Specialty's president Tom Beach, who described visits, starting in 2016, that carefully observed operations at that reciprocating-gas engine facility in Wisconsin.



*Handling Specialty designed, built and installed an industrial hoist similar to the one shown above in the GE Brilliant factory*

When GE made that move across the border, Niagara's Handling Specialty got the job. "We have become a real partner, and GE has treated us the same way," Beach said. "We're constantly there with them in Welland; training, maintaining and doing additions to complex equipment."

Handling Specialty is a 58-year-old Grimsby-based firm that specializes in the custom design and manufacture of large material handling and lift systems. It is part of Whiting Equipment Canada, has a staff of 125, annual revenues exceeding \$30 million, and boasts clients like Cirque du Soleil, Siemens and Lockheed Martin.

GE's new Brilliant Factory operation in Welland makes large-scale reciprocating gas engines, and Handling Specialty's expertise is woven into that process through its many equipment pieces that include guided intelligent vehicles, and an engine rotator-lift system which efficiently and safely moves engine components under construction.

It's a contract worth more than \$13 million in work to date for the GE plant, which is transitioning to new ownership under the private equity firm Advent International and operating under the business INNIO. At least 30 Handling employees are linked to ongoing tasks at the facility.

Beach notes a major start-up factory in a new city entails lots of hiring. A training-curve is associated with that, and proximity matters: "It's great that Handling Specialty is close enough to GE that we're easily able to send people out, to help them with this equipment."

The Niagara relationship also dovetailed into similar work for Handling Specialty at GE's Austria plant in Jenbach.

"We do well when we're in early with projects like these, and we can positively influence them," Beach said. "As we say here, it's also 'from womb to tomb' — we're there; from the conceptual beginning, to the training and maintenance later on."

"We do see ourselves at that Welland factory for years. I am happy for GE and also very happy for my staff," Beach said. "There's a great mutual-success story here." ■

*Tom Beach, president, Handling Specialty*



# Machine shop expands its horizons making a Sit-to-Stand Transfer Device

Written by Don Fraser

**A**n established custom machine shop has drilled into new business with the manufacturing of a popular sit-to-stand transfer aid in Niagara.

Jaide Products, established last year, is the distributor and marketer of the device known as a 'rotturner', now made at Niagara Precision Limited in St. Catharines.

It's an exciting development for Niagara Precision said Jane Buunk, who along with Debbie Whatling, is the co-owner of both Jaide Products Inc. and Niagara Precision Limited, which has been operating since 1975.

"At Niagara Precision, we've got a great reputation as a custom-machine shop, making custom made parts to customer specifications," said Buunk. "But before this, we had no product, and now we'll always have this to sell as well."

The Rotturner: a sit-to-stand transfer aid — made with premium steel — provides a safer and more dignified transfer for a client, while reducing the risk of back injury to a caregiver during client transfers.

A sturdy frame allows a smooth client transition between a bed, seat, commode or wheelchair. A turntable provides a stable area that the client can step onto while the transfer takes place, while rotating between different positions, with a locking device for client safety.



"The risk of back pain and other musculoskeletal disorders really recedes with this device," said Buunk. "And reduces the chance and fear of falling because the device surrounds them on three sides as they're being transferred."

A rotturner has a number of other applications, including the promotion of weight-bearing activities in a safe space and helping to stem muscular atrophy in a patient. It can also help build strength, improve balance and range of motion.

The device had been made in Haverhill, Suffolk, England since 1987, with many now in use in hospitals and care homes in England and Europe.

**"There's nothing really to compare with this product."**

*Jane Buunk, Co-owner, Jaide Products*

Through Jaide Products locally, it is now also on the approved vendors' list for a district school board and long-term care and retirement residences.

"We're also starting to distribute them out to the schools and the homes," Buunk said, adding about 9 of Niagara Precision's 20 employees are also involved with the Jaide's construction and marketing team.

"They sell very well in England, and this is the introduction of a brand-new product to the North American market," Buunk explained.

"So, there's nothing really to compare with this product, and we're still in the early stages. "The potential is huge — our Facebook page and Instagram, which we started in just the last three weeks, is reaching across the world." ■





# NIA IN ACTION 2018

*NIA members enjoy many benefits including networking opportunities, social events, plant tours, breakfasts, meetings and events.*



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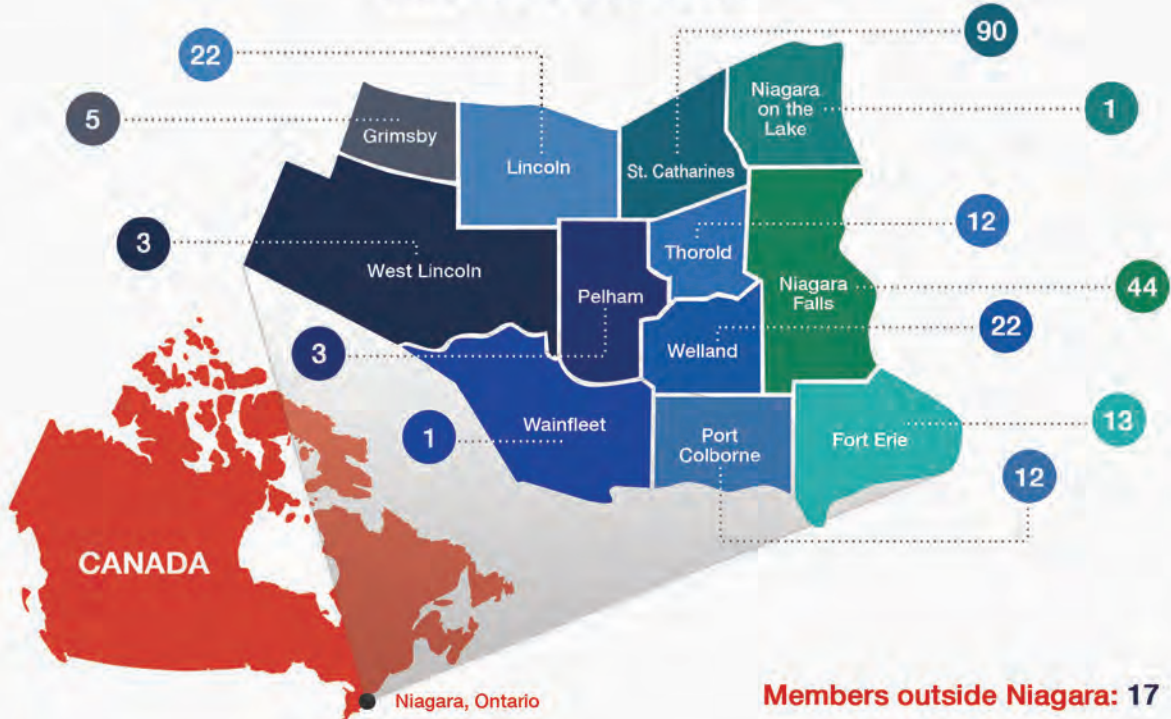


## MEMBERS

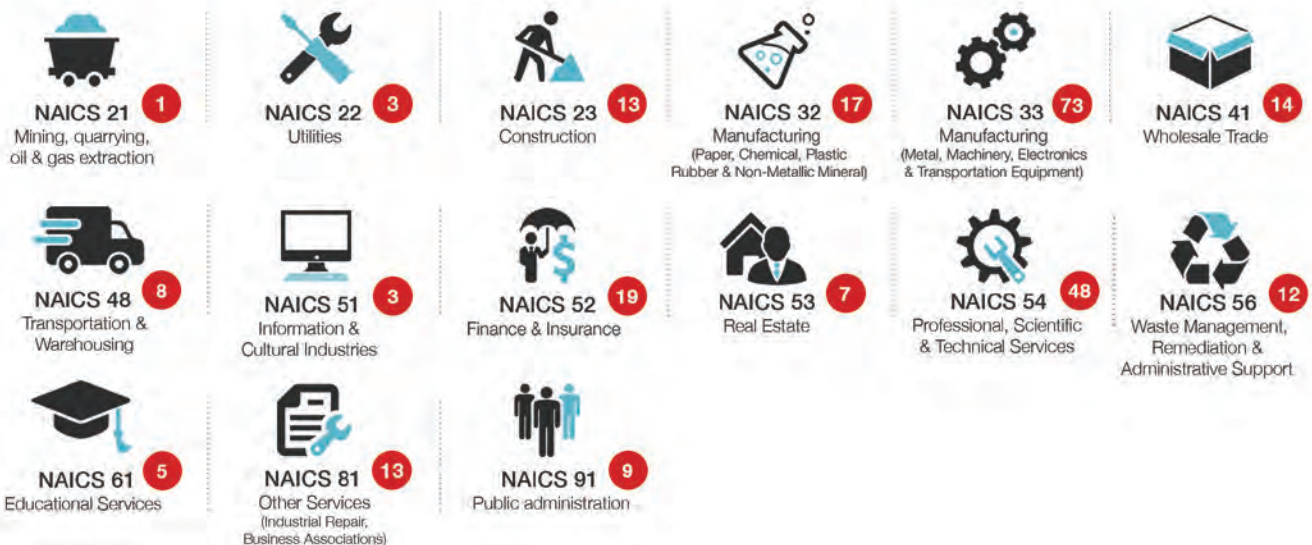
TOTAL **245**  
(no. of members)



## MEMBER LOCATION



## INDUSTRIAL COMPOSITION OF MEMBERSHIP





## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MEMBERS



Private Sector Members  
No. of Employees  
(approx.)

**6,030**



Total Revenue of  
Manufacturing Members  
(estimate)

**\$1.3B**

## Website Reach (Year 2018)



### Users

(no. of unique users  
to visit website)

**6,673**

### Pageviews

(no. of pageviews  
of all users)

**47,471**

## Newsletter Reach 2018



Current Reach  
(no. of recipients)

**591**



Educational Events **41**

General Membership **13**

Social Events **15**

Plant Tours **9**

Trade Missions **16**

## ADVOCACY ACHIEVEMENTS

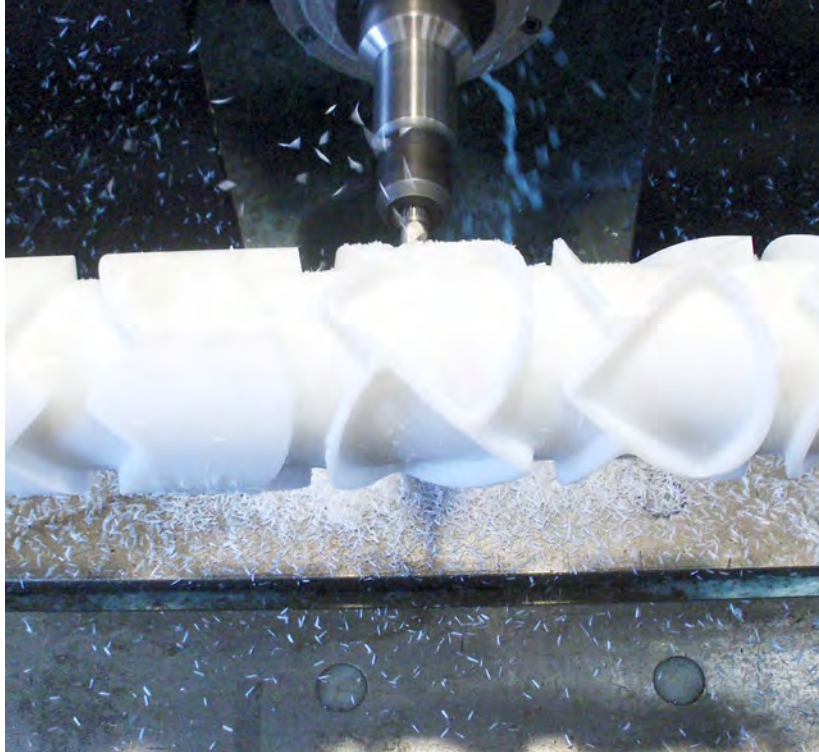
- Supported Niagara's bid to become a Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) Point
- Supported the creation of the Niagara Gateway Economic Zone and Centre industrial incentive program
- Submitted a positioning paper to the Province of Ontario advocating for more competitive industrial electrical rate structure
- Participated in many skills shortage reviews with a variety of industrial and educational stakeholders
- Submitted the NIA's position to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities supporting Niagara's position as a nationally significant trade corridor
- Sponsorship of a gathering of all municipal and regional elected politicians for review of intermodal transportation opportunities in Niagara Region
- Consistent promotion and awareness building of the relevance and benefits of Niagara's industrial and manufacturing cluster to the regional economy
- Vigilance on potential changes to municipal and regional industrial development charges and other policy changes that affect Niagara's industrial cluster





# A move to 3D opens up a new world for Hamill Machine

Written by Don Fraser



**A** robust 3D engineering-and-design package is allowing Hamill Machine to do more complex custom work than it ever could before.

Hamill Machine, a Niagara Falls machine shop, has an enduring and innovative history in the region that dates back to 1948.

It started as a general machine shop, and has grown to diversified offerings in general purpose industrial machining across Canada and the U.S. in many sectors including food, beverage and wine.

Hamill's shop processes include lathe turning, milling, CNC machining, welding, fabricating, and computer design, as well as complete equipment maintenance, re-builds and overhauls. It has 18 employees and completes about a thousand different jobs a year, varying in scope.

Contracts range from small pieces, to projects as large as a former \$1.1 million contract to build a custom loading barge for the Maid of the Mist. (Hamill recently completed the first five-year inspection contract for Hornblower boats which replaced the Maid of the Mist's in Niagara Falls, ON.)

General company operations range from CNC machining, machine design and building, millwrighting, dynamic balancing, fabricating, laser cutting — and increasingly, 3D-engineering capacity including 3D Printing.

"With 3D engineering and design, we can get into much more complex machining and builds than we could before," said Kevin Dobbs, the company's co-partner with Bob Benner, and

its general manager. "We can theoretically design and build anything now, with virtually no rework."

Dobbs said 3D-engineering adoption in their manufacturing processes began about 12 years ago, with a program called Pro/ENGINEER for various specialized projects. Hamill now has four engineers on staff including a P-Eng, all using the recently-acquired, Autodesk Inventor and Solidworks platforms — viewed as industry standards, with limitless capabilities.

Adding to this are 3D printers brought in earlier this year, that can actually print usable parts and not just prototypes.

It's also provided Hamill with new efficiencies.

"Doing it the old way, measuring and using hand-sketches for reverse engineering had its limitations," he said. "That was the main purpose in initially getting this 3D engineering, so we could generate our own drawings as well as designs."

"One thing we really still specialize in, is tight turnaround or rush-repair jobs," Dobbs explained, "About 50% of the work we complete is related to repairs, and keeping our customers running and the 3D software aids greatly in this."

Altogether, the 3D system has opened the door to new work in complex machining, to the extent: "If you can think it, we can build it," Dobbs says. It also allows for an excellent process flow to machining through their CNC units.

"We are simply no longer constrained by what we earlier could do on pen and paper." ■



Left: The PythonX Structural Fabrication System gives Thorold's South Central Industrial a competitive edge.

Below: South Central Industrial's President, Rob Kaune



## Robotic cutting system a game-changer for Thorold company

Written by Don Fraser

**A**t South Central Industrial, a robotic plasma-cutting CNC system for structural steel is allowing for quicker and safer cutting, with less waste and fewer mistakes.

Just recently acquired and installed in a new building — the \$1.3 million PythonX Structural Fabrication System, has already been a game changer for the company.

Company president Rob Kaune said in the beginning they did this metalwork using hand tools, but now South Central can bring in full, untouched lengths of steel that are cut in-house.

It's a performance powerhouse in being able to do accurate cuts, copes, holes, compound mitre cuts based on inputting printing information from a project drawing.

It marks beams in about 5-8 minutes, compared to manual requirements of up-to an hour per beam.

After the beams brought in by conveyor and processed, they are delivered to work stations, where a crew can then assemble the parts to specifications based on the Python's markings.

"We're taking away the more dangerous and harder, manual parts of the jobs now," Kaune said. "And that's the grinding and marking of the steel, and putting punch marks on." The PythonX is also making his shop safer, he adds.

South Central is 25 years old, has a team of about eight and revenues in the neighbourhood of \$3 million per year.

Kaune said the Allanburg firm began as a builder of truck bodies and then became certified to start doing industrial maintenance. About seven years ago, it moved into the structural steel business and has since done a number of projects across Canada, offering a wide range of services related to millwrighting, metal fabrication and erection.

Its jobs have included work on air-traffic control towers, some small malls and plazas, and a poultry plant.

"This Python X helps keep us competitive," he said, adding customers are getting the work done at a reasonable price and company efficiencies are being improved.

"It's been quite the milestone for us." ■





*Ribbon cutting ceremony for Handling Specialty's blast booth inside the former Westinghouse plant in Hamilton.*

## Blast and paint site boosts Handling Specialty's business coverage

*Written by Don Fraser*

**A** push to make a key company function in-house has painted the way to an innovative new speciality for Handling Specialty.

Over two decades, the company has earned a reputation for developing highly-customized, giant handling equipment for its customers.

"We build really high-quality, heavy and functional lifting equipment, and we make it smart," said company president Tom Beach. "That has allowed us to produce large pieces for major companies such as GE in Welland and others."

With these bigger capabilities, an issue arose with Handling outgrowing its blast coating and painting capabilities, and having to outsource work in recent years.

"There was frustration about the process," said Beach. "You build something, you then might have to break it down, put it on a truck and ship it out for painting, wait for it, get it back." In that environment, Handling focused on costing a possible new blasting and painting system and facility, with a solid rate of return, that would expedite orders for customers. The number-crunching showed it made sense.

"So we pulled the trigger on that project," said Beach of the recently-opened blast-and-paint unit inside the former Westinghouse Electric Corp. plant in Hamilton's Burlington Street industrial district.

The old Steeltown facility had all the right stuff: a high bay, large doors, 180-tonne cranes for lifting and the physical real estate the company desired.

"It fit our purposes, perfectly," Beach said, of the section inside the sprawling site now known as Handling's Plant 2. The system there allows Handling to transition from assembly to painting their pieces in a seamless way, while using extra shifts to accelerate the work.

"We are a manufacturer looking for ways to always do things better, so this is an exciting milestone," said Beach. Handling's site employs three full-time painter-blasters and two engineers, with an official grand opening in the works. Handling, which is part of Whiting Equipment Canada, is also looking to expand their customer reach.

"We're big relationship people," Beach said. "We've been thinking, 'why can't we blast and paint for our manufacturing friends ... a push this year is to educate others about this capability.'"

The company president adds Handling's valued relationships include a new association with the Niagara Industrial Association. "This is the perfect time for us to join the NIA," said Beach. "We bring to them a Niagara-based firm with an excellent reputation."

"I expect to find new friends and relationships here, and there may be opportunities to cooperatively work with members on other exciting projects." ■



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# De-risking in the digital space: A Niagara College – Steelcon partnership

Written by Tanya Hvilivitzky, Niagara College

It was major news this past December when Steelcon Fabrication Inc. — a Brampton-based structural steel company — announced a \$40 million investment into a St. Catharines facility, along with the creation of up to 100 new high-skilled jobs.

The new Garden City location is part of Steelcon's expansion of its revolutionary SIN-Beam line — an innovation that produces construction beams that are lighter, using less steel than conventional wide flange beams. When they needed precise logistical expertise in installing this massive fabrication line, they turned to Niagara College's Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (WAMIC) and its 3D spatial scanning technology.

Installing the robotic SIN-beam assembler/welder — machinery that took 11 large shipping containers to transport — came with complex hurdles, explained Fabian Hoggard, general manager of SIN Structures, the company incorporated by Steelcon to operate the day-to-day manufacturing at the Grantham Avenue location.

At 250 feet long and 29 feet wide, the automated production line had to fit inside a 500 ft-long, 30 ft-wide bay, and still have enough room to store raw materials and finished product. SIN Structures also had to design and incorporate material

handling equipment to maneuver the 50-ft x 5-ft steel beams, once manufactured, through a 20-ft opening between columns, into an adjacent bay for processing.

Add to that dilemma the variation in floor elevation well beyond the half-inch tolerance of the new 150-ton machinery and a very limited ceiling height.

"We basically had to shoehorn the equipment into a less-than-ideal building envelope," said Hoggard.

It was crucial for SIN Structures to have precise measurements to plan and coordinate the intricate installation process.

Enter Niagara College and its leading-edge 3D-laser scanning and visualization technology, capturing the dimensional data of the facility to verify various elevations, distances between pieces of equipment, as well as the floor gradient, both accurately and reliably.

"This technology is able to de-risk the equipment placement by realizing it in the digital space first, before SIN Structures committed to the placement," explained Jim Lambert, centre manager of WAMIC, part of the College's Research & Innovation division.

The research team, including staff and a graduate student, utilized its FARO Focus 3D laser scanner inside the facility to create a three-dimensional image of every visible surface, using laser light to measure millions of points, which is then imported into CAD software, said Lambert.

"Having that 3D profile from Niagara College was extremely valuable to see how we could move things in 3D space," said Hoggard, adding that he hopes to further partner with the College to develop the automated equipment to fully facilitate the movement of the beams to the nearby bay.

The College-Steelcon partnership was made possible through funding from the National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC IRAP). ■

*Niagara College's research team utilized 3D laser spatial scanning technology to create a three-dimensional image of all surroundings (left image), in order for SIN Structures to precisely plan for the installation of its massive new SIN Beam line (right image).*





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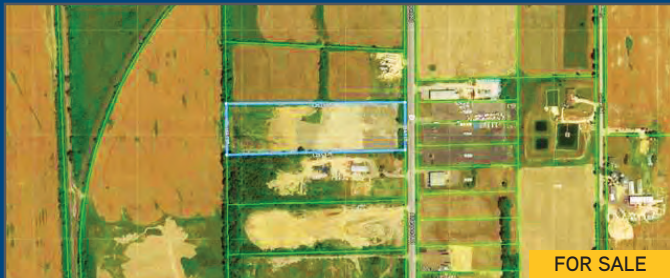
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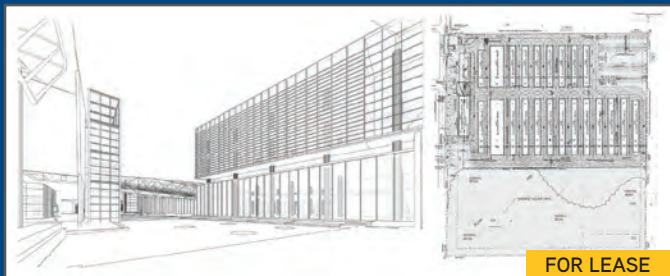
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Left: A red and white H120 Helicopter adorns the entrance of Airbus Helicopters' Canadian headquarters in Fort Erie

Below: Dwayne Charette, Chief Operating Officer of Airbus Helicopters Canada



# A thriving helicopter builder celebrates 35 years in Niagara

Written by Don Fraser

**F**or Airbus Helicopters Canada, it's a point of local pride. Its Fort Erie plant plays an important role in a company that is also the world's No. 1 helicopter manufacturer.

And locally, four of its aircraft have also been delivered to one of the region's flagship tourism and sightseeing operations.

"We're really proud of the fact Niagara Helicopters in Niagara Falls, flies four of our H130 helicopters following a 2015 fleet replacement," said Dwayne Charette, Chief Operating Officer of Airbus Helicopters Canada. "They recognized the value of this product.

"It's a real made-in-Niagara story here —Airbus Helicopters Canada partnering with such a world-class tourism operator."

The facility is based in Fort Erie and is celebrating its 35th anniversary as one of Niagara's key private-sector employers, with 270-plus employees. Fortunes continue to rise, with the plant increasing its workforce every year since 2014.

Airbus, the parent company, is the world's No. 1 helicopter manufacturer, and its array of civil and military helicopters the world's largest.

It is a leading supplier of helicopters in Canada used in para-public and civil duties such as law enforcement, emergency

medical services, oil and gas, utilities and other transport needs. Its Niagara manufacturing facility receives aircraft in an assembled state. The Fort Erie facility is then tasked with the completion of customization and delivery to customers, completing an average of 10-15 new aircraft a year.

To that end, it specializes in composite manufacturing for eight different Airbus platforms. Composite is a pre-engineered, specialized material laid into moulds and heated, until it hardens into a desired part.

Recently, a highlight for Airbus Helicopters was the delivery of a new generation, twin-engine H145 helicopter to the RCMP.

"It was quite a coup for us, because it was the first H145 to enter into service in this country," Charette said, adding the OPP, Hydro One and STARS Ambulance in Alberta are examples of other significant clients. "I think it speaks to our reach across Canada, that although we are in Niagara, our reach is from east to west."

Repair and overhaul activity for dynamic components and blades is another key aspect to its Fort Erie operations.

"We have grown that part of the business, and expanded another 65% of that shop," Charette said. "We're the specialized site for single-engine dynamic component repair have lots of activity there, including internationally."

Airbus Helicopters also regards its regional and Niagara Industrial Association connections as valuable ones.

"We have a good relationship with the NIA," Charette said. "We also believe in giving back to the community and partnering with local industry and post-secondary education." ■

# From a garage, to world robotics exporter in 10 years

Written by Don Fraser

**W**hat began as an online parts business in a St. Catharines garage has become a thriving Niagara industrial automation and robotics parts, service and integration firm with potent global reach.

“We actually developed our international base first,” explained Dave Burgess, company president and owner of Factory Surplus Direct Inc. “Then over the years, we worked our way back to business at home.

“And now we’re shipping product everywhere.”

In 2011, the upstart company expanded to a stand-alone shop in the Garden City and then moved several times in the region. Its first focus was in buying up inventories, hitting the auctions. Things picked up steam, when they offered servicing and integration.

“As we started refurbishing our equipment, we were outsourcing our repairs and thought ‘let’s bring people on board who can do this’,” said Burgess. “This evolved over the decade to where we are.”

Four years ago, the firm settled on a steadily-expanding 18,000-square-foot site on Cushman Road in St. Catharines.

The ten-year-old business — operating as FSD Robotics — now offers wide-ranging specialties, including automated robotics systems, consulting, engineering, spare parts, in-house and field robotics repair, industrial electronics, CNC, and servo-motor repair and refurbishments. “We are a full-service company,” said Burgess.

“And because we focused internationally initially, as we moved back locally it got easier and easier. That opened us up to large companies in the area, including Linamar, Magna and GE.” FSD has also ventured into multiple markets, including automotive, aerospace, food and beverage and any industry using automation or robotics. It is also moving into custom robotics-design.

“We’re experiencing massive growth,” he said. “This January, we doubled sales over the previous year. This February, we tripled it.” Burgess said FSD is anticipating another record sales year.

He reflects his company is almost in “reactive mode” as a player in an industrial-robotics sector growing by leaps and bounds: “All these technologies are merging, it’s making it more accessible to the small and medium-sized companies.”

That robotics accessibility is helping industry in the region, which has lost major manufacturing, but has been successfully pivoting to SME’s over the past 15 years.

“Niagara has a ton of potential,” said Burgess, adding his involvement with the expanding NIA has presented another great opportunity for area operators like him.

And as FSD manages an enviable success, growing pains continue, Burgess adds. The company has a fulltime staff of 10, plus a handful of contractors.

“We will be buying our own building in the next three years. We are doubling in size each year... we’re just running out of room.” ■



FSD Team, from left to right: Emily Daku, Jill Reid, Colin Mackenzie, Dave Burgess, Craig Wolkowski, Jimmy Belcastro, Jamie Kallio, Trevor White, Maria Gutierrez, Jesse Klingspohn





# Family and culture root a Grimsby builder for four decades

Written by Don Fraser

**N**RB Inc. has remained a nimble and growing operation, that's been steadfastly true to its roots. The modular structure builder has been a family firm for 40 years, steeped in a culture of superior service and attention to business changes, says its company president Bob McNeil.

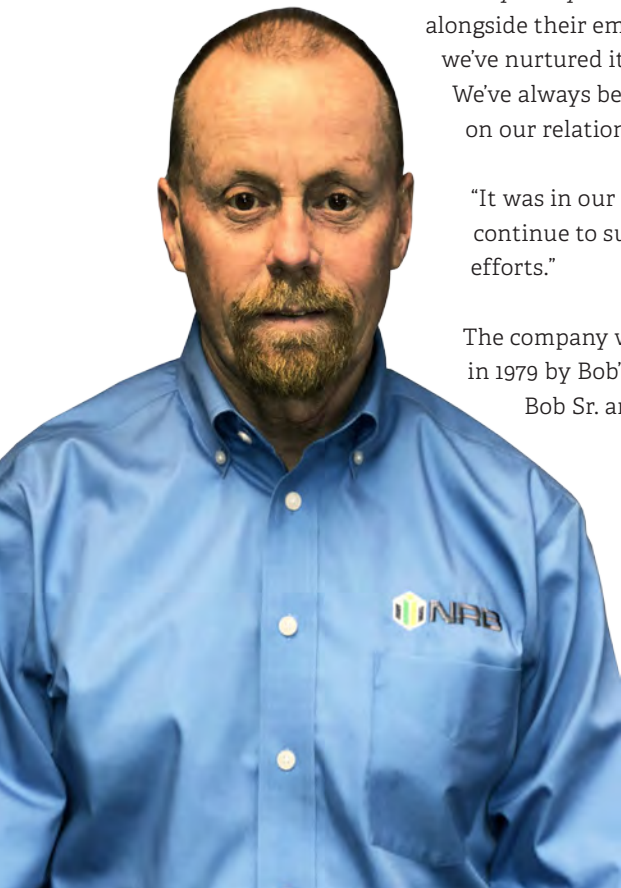
"NRB has always been customer focused, and market driven like that," said McNeil, marking an anniversary milestone for the firm, along with staff. "I'm extremely proud we've gotten to our 40th, it's not an easy industry.

"It had humble beginnings, but my parents were down-to-earth. They really worked hard alongside their employees and we've nurtured it," he said. We've always been focused on our relationships.

"It was in our DNA to continue to support those efforts."

The company was founded in 1979 by Bob's parents Bob Sr. and Jean

Bob McNeil,  
President,  
NRB Inc.



McNeil at their South Service Road location in Grimsby, with five employees. There, it has remained and prospered.

"Their main market back then was building portable classrooms," said McNeil. "After starting with wood-framed buildings, in short order they got into steel-framed buildings and other construction materials."

Originally called Niagara Relocatable Buildings, it changed to NRB Inc. in 1990. Two years later, Bob and Jean retired and passed the torch onto their children, with sons Bob and Craig McNeil the current owners.

As market opportunities came along and boosted the business, NRB expanded from its original two-acres site, to almost 20-acres at a 100,000-square-foot production facility, with currently 140 employees and revenues of about \$40 million a year.

**"NRB has always been customer focused and market driven."**

*Bob McNeil, President, NRB*

"It's been a steady, fairly-straight line up," McNeil said. NRB builds modular structures indoors at its Grimsby plant and ships them to client sites, mostly in Ontario, but also across Canada and the U.S. It constructs many permanent buildings out of its original plant location. It still builds classroom portables, and has moved into product lines for in-plant offices, office buildings, convenience stores, oil change facilities, kiosks and other structures.

"We can go from a small 100-square-foot building to an 80,000-square-foot multi-storey office complex," McNeil said.

It's also a cool-beans culture at NRB, McNeil reveals: "We consider ourselves low-key in how we approach things. But we have a lot of quiet confidence, and I say that without boasting. We're technically astute, skilled at how we run our projects and we are financially strong."

"It's been a very, very good company for 40 years." ■



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# WHY I SIT ON THE BOARD



*Front row (from left to right): Wendy Smith, Verne Milot, Bruno Iafrate, Don Cyr, Aaron Tisdelle, Vincent Shaikh, Kevin Hooiveld, Jane Buunk. Back row (from left to right): Blake Landry, Ian Hill, Roy Timms, Adam Joon, Larry Anderson, Kevin Jacobi, Jordan Sherlock, Marco Marino*



"In my years on the board I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet many of our members and hear their stories of success, their challenges, their plans for the future and how they actively work to make their business and their community a better place. This is why I sit on the board; to share, celebrate and commiserate with those that I stand shoulder to shoulder with in life and in business in Niagara."

**Aaron Tisdelle, President, Girotti Machine**

"As a manufacturer in Niagara, I have a long list of challenges that keep me up at night. Being a member of the NIA has always provided direct benefit to our company, and now my participation at the Board level gives me an opportunity to have more of a voice and an impact on my business, and the Niagara region."

**Jordan Sherlock, President, North America Traffic Inc.**

"With Twitter, Facebook and other social media outlets, there is no lack of ways people can complain about the state of manufacturing in Niagara. Instead of complaining, I prefer volunteering my time to groups that are trying to be a positive impact in our community. The Niagara Industrial Association strives to be a voice for local manufacturing and a vehicle for change. I'm proud to be a member of this group. That is why I sit on the board."

**Kevin Jacobi, Executive Director, CanadaBW Logistics Inc.**

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"Sitting on the board allows me the opportunity to connect with my community from a much more strategic position. Rather than simply being an extra set of hands to help carry out a mission; as a board member, I have the opportunity to use my voice and connections to help shape the organization's mission, and in turn, the future of manufacturing in Niagara."

**Kevin Hooiveld, Vice President of Operations, Book Depot**

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"With over 35 years of working experience within the manufacturing sector and having contributed direct operational input throughout my manufacturing career, I feel compelled to offer my experience, time and efforts, to sit on the NIA Board, as well as share lessons learned from my other Board of Directors work. By doing so, my efforts are focused on improving member benefit and to add value in promoting membership profiles, within the manufacturing community in Niagara and beyond. Sitting on this board allows me to share knowledge and experience, increase networking opportunities and a chance for me to assist local entrepreneurs and make a difference in their operational and manufacturing operations in Niagara. Giving back to the local community should not have to be requested, but should be a life-long commitment for each and every one of us."

**Bruno Iafrate, CFO/VP Operations, Imbibitive Technologies Corporations**

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"As lifelong resident of Niagara, I know how critical industry and manufacturing is to our local economy. I proudly serve as a member of the NIA Board of Directors as a meaningful way to give back to a community that has given me so much, both in my personal and professional life. I am thrilled to work with the NIA's Board and membership, and to play a small role in the support and encouragement of Niagara's industrial and manufacturing businesses."

**Adam Joon, MBA, Client Partner, Advisory Services, BDC**

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"The manufacturing industry has had a long and significant history in the Niagara region and continues to be a very important economic driver. It is a great honour to serve on the Niagara Industrial Association Board and to play a role in fostering its and the industry's continued success."

**Don Cyr, PhD, MBA, MA, Professor of Finance  
Brock University Goodman School of Business**

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"Niagara is where I was born, raised a family and grew a business. I want to see Niagara become everything it can be. Being part of the NIA as a board member means that I can be a part of this growth and help to secure a solid future for the Region."

**Larry Anderson, CEO, Larry Anderson Consultants**

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"NIA has a very important role to fulfill. It endeavours to be the "Voice of Industry" as well as a catalyst for sector sustainability, growth and development. By virtue of their participation, our members acknowledge that we live in an interdependent business world and that entities, such as ours, do enable greater business awareness and foster mutual support."

**Verne Milot, P. Eng, MBA, Growth Associates**

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"In sort of an about-face from my first 'why I sit on the board', where I said I wanted to ensure a strong region and force my support upon an association that would be heard within local government and industry, I now sit on the board because I KNOW the NIA is that Voice! Without the strong volunteer board that is now in place, led by a Chairperson that is a great speaker and activist in Niagara Industry promotion, businesses like my Dilts Piston Hydraulics would be missing opportunity and a place to find solutions. Growth takes investment, I now find the greatest investment to secure growth is participation. Being able to offer my expertise, suggestions and comments, while listening and discussing those of my fellow board members, makes me proud to sit on board; makes me proud to participate in the Industrial future of Niagara."

**Ian Hill, President, Dilts Piston Hydraulics Inc.**

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"Sitting on the NIA Board allows me to engage our membership and to grow our future workforce. I am passionate about connecting our members with secondary and post-secondary educational institutions so they can train the best and brightest future manufacturers for our skilled trades in Niagara. Training the youth of Niagara. The Future of manufacturing."

**Jane C. Buunk, Niagara Precision Limited**

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"The economic prosperity of Niagara depends on having a high-quality post-secondary education system that develops the knowledge and skills of its workforce. It is also vital that we encourage and get students excited about local manufacturing careers to ensure Niagara's manufacturing sector is sustainable in meeting future workforce demands. I am honoured to serve on the Niagara Industrial Association Board of Directors and thrilled to be given the opportunity to develop a future workforce pipeline and advance the interests of Niagara's manufacturing sector."

**Vincent Shaikh, M.Eng., Dean of Media, Trades and Technology, Niagara College**

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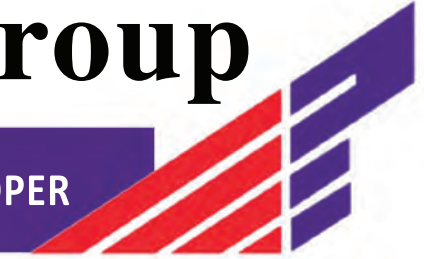
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