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INDUSTRIES IN  
NIAGARA

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# FORGING A NEW NIAGARA

*Written by Don Fraser*

**Throughout this publication you will find profiles on 5 established manufacturing industries in Niagara including stories of NIA members active in those industries.**

Niagara's industrial sector has endured a rough road over the past 25 years. From a powerhouse that once dominated the region, it suffered the same fate as many eastern North American manufacturing areas, weathering plant closures, relocations and consolidations. Things are changing.

Over the past 10-15 years, bright lights have emerged to help this sector regain its footing. Innovation, quality products, specialization, corporate alliances and new markets are creating a future for Niagara's next generation of manufacturers.

Many are also benefiting from being here, its niche location in a Free-Trade environment, excellent transportation links and proximity to the border, with a huge market. Still others voiced similar concerns about an adequate skilled labour force, costly provincial and federal government labour and regulatory changes, plus currency and trade trepidations.

Overall, we got the sense the tide is turning, thanks to a wave of nimble, competitive and stalwart Niagara businesses that are primed to prosper. ■



**niagara**  
industrial association

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# WELCOME

## TO ENGAGED IN INDUSTRY

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On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to introduce the Niagara Industrial Association's (NIA) first publication, "Engaged in Industry".

We are very proud to showcase Niagara industry and the services that support it. This magazine heralds a new chapter in the NIA as we reach out to a broader audience to exhibit the Niagara region's industrial and manufacturing strengths and potential to both our community and to industry outside of the region. This magazine acts as a pillar of recognition to the value and strength our members bring to Niagara and their broader customer base.

I would like to thank our members for their support in launching this instrumental promotional piece that will allow our partners in industry across the region to position Niagara industry's potential to other regions, provinces and countries, as we continue to build here at home in our neighborhoods, our communities and our workplaces.

Please enjoy and celebrate the many successes that are displayed within this magazine and reflect on all that we have built here in Niagara. It is from our strong industrial history and tradition that the Niagara region was built, and it is with a strong industrial future that Niagara will grow.

Sincerely,



Aaron Tisdelle  
Chair, NIA Board of Directors







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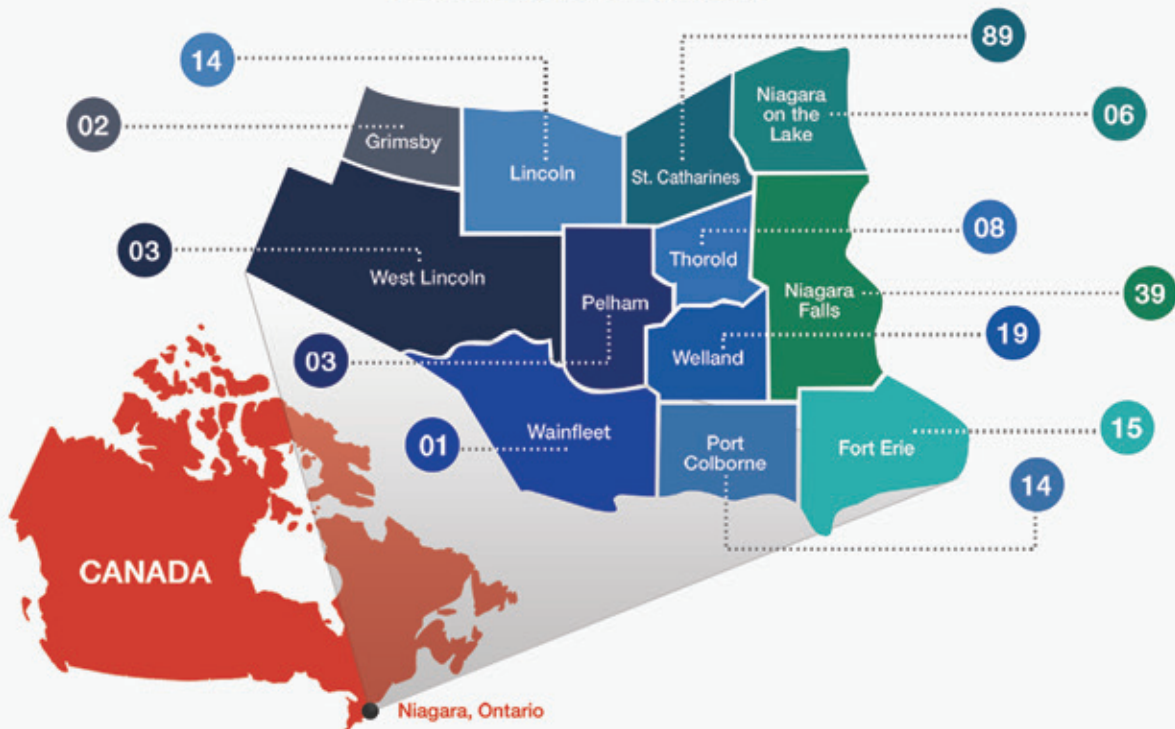
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## MEMBERS

TOTAL **220**  
(no. of members)



## MEMBER LOCATION



## INDUSTRIAL COMPOSITION OF MEMBERSHIP





## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MEMBERS



Private Sector Members  
No. of Employees  
(approx.)

**5,600**



Total Revenue of  
Manufacturing Members  
(estimate)

**\$ 976M**

## Website Reach (Year 2015)



Users  
(no. of unique users  
to visit website)

**9,268**

Pageviews  
(no. of pageviews  
of all users)

**47,661**

## Newsletter Reach (Aug. 2015 to present)



Current Reach  
(no. of recipients)

**305**



**Educational Events** ..... **64**  
Jan 2014 to Present

**General Meetings** ..... **22**  
Jan 2014 to Present

**Social Events** ..... **17**  
Jan 2014 to Present

**Plant Tours** ..... **11**  
Jan 2014 to Present

**Trade Missions** ..... **18**  
Jan 2014 to Present

## ADVOCACY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Supported Niagara's bid to become **FTZ Point**
- Reversed decision to end industrial garbage pickup at Regional government
- Lobbied Regional government to eliminate industrial development charges **(\$2.22/SF)**
- Supported the creation of the Niagara Gateway Economic Zone & Centre investment incentive
- Supported FedDev funding application for "Year of Manufacturing" program funding **(\$1.57M)**
- Supported Industrial Power Users of Niagara initiative to reduce electricity rate for heavy users
- Supported Niagara College application to become Technology Access Centre funding **(\$2.04M)**
- Supported Provincial investment in Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre **(\$4.2M)**
- Advised Niagara school boards and Niagara College on curriculum development initiatives to align education with employee skills needs in Niagara manufacturing sector



# Barber Hymac Hydro Inc.

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*Chris VanKralingen, President*

## **BARBER HYMAC HYDRO INC.**

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In addition to large component machining and fabricating, we do ASSEMBLY work on gearboxes, large mechanical machinery, conveyors, circular drive units, water turbines, cranes, etc.

For a full range of support to our customers, we provide FIELD SERVICE by our qualified millwrights, welders, fitters, and electricians. Our technicians provide onsite inspections, testing, repair, rehabilitation, rigging, overhauls, machinery moving and more.

Barber Hymac Hydro Inc. strives to provide fabricating, machining, assembly and field service that meets or exceeds customer expectations and internally established goals. Barber Hymac Hydro Inc. is committed to comply with customer, regulatory, ISO9001:2015 Quality Standard and CWB Standard W47.1 requirements; maintaining the effectiveness of the Quality Management System and continually seeking out process and product improvement opportunities. Please contact us for a quote or tour of our facility.

# CHEMICALS + PLASTICS

## GDP IMPACT

**\$359.5**  
MILLION

## EXPORTS

**\$583.3**  
MILLION

## JOB

**1,877**

## COMPANIES

**44**

The chemicals industry is generally composed of businesses that are manufacturing chemicals and chemical preparations, from organic and inorganic raw materials. Plastics firms are generally making goods by processing raw rubber and plastics materials.



## MANCUSO CHEMICALS

*Written by Don Fraser*

Like many Niagara manufacturers and industrial firms, international sales are serious business for Mancuso Chemicals Ltd.

Mancuso, which has been around for 32 years, produces dozens of industrial chemical products for metalworking, auto-fluid and coatings industries around the world. The firm sells mainly to foundries, steel mills and more recently, coatings and auto-fluid industries.

But domestically, much of that old business has faded. Jim Mancuso, vice-president of the Niagara Falls company, says most of their traditional clients in the Canadian market have disappeared, and the change has been striking.

In the 1970's, Mancuso might have had upwards of 1,000 customers in Ontario alone. "Now I think we're at about seven for our original foundry chemical business," said Mancuso. In its place is a world market that's painting a brighter future, where quality rules.

"At the end of the day, we're well known for producing a very high-end product," he said. "If you need a high-end product, we're one of the few places you can get it."

The company, with about 50 employees and around



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\$50 million annually in sales, also has an edge in owning in-house technology that competitors don't have. Being local has its advantages, he says. "Niagara to us is better than other places could be, with close proximity to the States, good highways." While the plant is a big power consumer, and electricity is expensive here, it is reliable.

A downside is heavy-industry unfriendly legislation in Ontario, he adds. Many of his Niagara colleagues who were interviewed insist this has to change. "I think our biggest drawback is new provincial and federal policies," he said.

"They are not thoughtful enough about the consequences these policies and decisions have on our types of business. I think they don't understand our needs. This is especially so, as we now have such a pro-business environment to the south of us." ■



**Networking, networking, networking. These are the three most valuable benefits of being an NIA member. Membership provides a great opportunity for us to learn from other manufacturers by sharing best practices, and gaining access to services available to us."**

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



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**"We are doing something very specific in our work, creating added real value for our business customers."**

*Craig Bolton, President*

## PENINSULA PLASTICS

*Written by Don Fraser*

Peninsula Plastics Ltd. literally works without a break to make its mark as a custom injection moulding leader in Niagara.

Day and night, the 35 injection-moulding machines are churning with special production orders at its Fort Erie operations that range from 20 to 1,550 tonnes. The company has also created a niche that's seen along curbsides across the continent.

About six years ago, Peninsula Plastics ventured into the recycling bin business, and now has a line of organic recycling and blue bin containers sold throughout North America. But its real focus is custom injection moulding, supplying orders to a core business mostly located within a 350 km radius.

"We are doing something very specific in our work, creating added real value for our business customers," said company president Craig Bolton.

"And there is also a lot of competition with injection moulding," said Bolton. "So that means regions closest to you get covered in your business territory," he said, noting otherwise it means having to contend with spiking freight and transportation costs. Customers also want their key sellable product close at hand.

"If you had a mould or part for somebody, for whom this is their business, they want to be near that core product that they sell," Bolton said. Niagara also provides a boost for the firm in its proximity to the U.S., where a lot of Peninsula Plastics business goes. "We are very well-versed in crossing the border, and handling orders that need to be shipped to

locations throughout the U.S. "We're very easy to get to."

Like all manufacturers, the company has occasional challenges, including a pervasive skilled labour shortage and weathering costly legislative changes. Top of mind is this year's minimum wage hike in Ontario to \$14/hr., with neighbouring jurisdictions maintaining lower, more competitive rates.

While Bolton supports the idea in principle, the speed of the increase is creating a hit for businesses like his, he said.

"Some of these choices are making it an unfavourable environment for manufacturers," Bolton adds, noting a boost in the minimum wage also creates an internal wage issue, as higher salaries need to get bumped up to retain equity among job categories. "It has literally added \$500,000 to my bottom line." ■

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# ELECTRONIC + ELECTRICAL

## GDP IMPACT

**\$51.2**  
MILLION

## EXPORTS

**\$83**  
MILLION

## JOBS

**497**

## COMPANIES

**30**

Firms in this category are mostly engaged in manufacturing computers, computer peripheral equipment, communications equipment, and similar electronic products, as well as components for such products. Computer and electronic product manufacturing industries use production processes characterized by the design and use of integrated circuits, and the application of highly-specialized miniaturization technologies. Electrical components companies are generally manufacturing products that generate, distribute and use electrical power.

## APPLIED STROBE

*Written by Don Fraser*

**A**ppplied Strobe Technology is helping light the way to safer workplaces with industrial strobe warning lights.

The Niagara Falls firm, owned by Al DesRoches, has been in existence for more than 30 years. Applied Strobe is an ISO 9001 certified company and has been for more than 15 years. Its current primary business is manufacturing high-quality, industrial strobe warning lights.

"We started out more with the general-purpose lights, but explosion-proof and hazardous area lights seem to be where the big market is right now," company operations manager Mike Slovak said, adding the general-purpose lights are still part of its line.

Applied Strobe deals strictly with distributors, within Canada, U.S., Mexico and South America. It also sells worldwide, to countries such as Dubai and Saudi Arabia. "We've also been getting international business that comes through inquiries to our website," he added. Office manager



Sheila DeMarsh adds their healthiest growth market is Alberta's oil fields.

Being small, with only three employees, allows for greater manufacturing flexibility, Slovak said.

"Over the years, we've had a few customers come to us, looking for solutions and specific products," Slovak said. "We've been able to modify distinct products to accommodate their needs."





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"We also try to ship out to orders the same or next day, especially for smaller orders," he said.

Not all competitor companies can do that, adds DeMarsh, with some demanding weeks of lead times before sending their products out to customers. Applied Strobe also keeps a large inventory of parts, so it can assemble its manufactured products rapidly for shipping.

It's the kind of small firm that could theoretically pack its bags and move anywhere. But those working for the company live in Niagara and want to stay here. Being close to the border is another important asset, the company operations manager adds.

"If we need something quickly, we can order it, ship it and bring it over," Slovak said.

As for challenges, "the product we make, we can't really create a market for. If the demand is there, it's there."

In that vein, company sales can be tied to the fortunes of the energy sector and projects underway in Western Canada, which are in turn linked to oil prices.

"With the North American Free Trade agreement being renegotiated, we don't yet know the ultimate outcome of that," Slovak noted.

"So those are things that are out of our control." ■

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# INDUSTRIAL ENCODER

Written by Don Fraser



Tony Petrecca acknowledges that the role encoders play in manufacturing may not be engrained knowledge to the average person. But what they achieve in this process is critical, and Industrial Encoder Corporation is front-and-centre to this process.

"It's an interesting business," said Petrecca, the company's president and managing director. In his world of factory automation, "when anything moves, we measure it," he said, explaining this "closed-loop feedback process."

In robotics, every pivot and movement point needs to be measured, and that is what we do. As an example, a motor might have to run at 1,000 RPM. Their encoder generates a signal converting information about how fast it is actually running to the controller, who can read and monitor what is happening. Then, that controller makes adjustments as needed to ensure a reliable, consistent and safe manufacturing process.

The company has a diverse product range, with Petrecca choosing what models to build in Niagara, based on volume, customer requirements and cost-effectiveness.

Industrial Encoder is a member of the GESgroup (Global Encoder Solutions Group), which has more than three decades experience in the design, manufacturing, sales and marketing of precision optical and magnetic encoders worldwide.

When Petrecca started the Niagara company in 1997, he opted to go with a partner in Germany that had already spent four years in developing products. "Essentially, we brought their designs and products to Canada, started selling them and then, rapidly, actually assembling them here to customer specifications," he said. "We also act as a distributor for the (international) group products, and vice-versa, with the local Industrial Encoder a member of the Global Encoder Solutions Group... if anything is sold in the Americas, it comes through me," Petrecca added.

The six-employee business is located in St. Catharines' Commerce Place, having moved into its purpose-built 5,000

square-foot state-of-the art facility in 2007.

In years since, volatility in currency exchanges is among his biggest challenges. "Sometimes it stacks in our favour, and sometimes against us," he said, noting increasing competitive pressure from Asia is also a factor.

"Encoders are still very specialized," Petrecca said. "But they're becoming more and more of a commodity. Quality is expected, but prices keep dropping."

With that in mind, staying nimble and cost-conscious is a business elemental. "It's a balancing act, you always have to balance your bottom line," Petrecca said. "And we're also one of the few of these sorts of companies left that are truly independent, so we have a lot more flexibility than the big guys." ■



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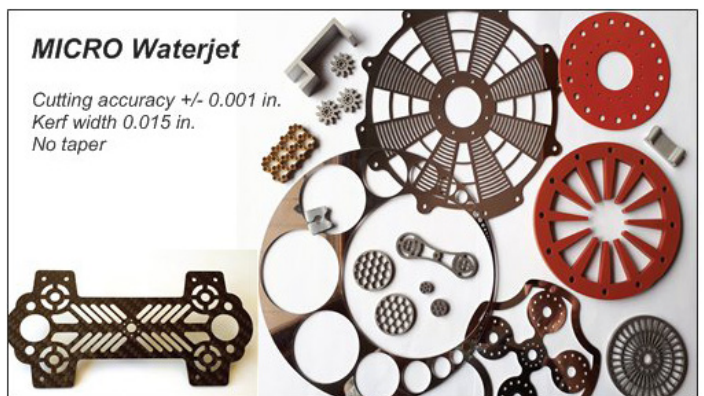
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# FABRICATED METAL

## GDP IMPACT

**\$1.21**  
BILLION

## EXPORTS

**\$1.96**  
BILLION

## JOBS

**2,724**

## COMPANIES

**107**

Here, companies are mostly involved in operating machine tools, such as lathes (including computer numerically controlled, or CNC), automatic screw machines, and machines for boring, grinding, milling and otherwise working metal, to produce machine parts and equipment, other than complete machines, for the trade. Machine shops providing custom and repair services are included. Other activities are forging and stamping; tool manufacturing; structural metals; boiler tank and shipping containers hardware; spring and wire products; coating, engraving, heat treating, and allied activities.



## CMI HEAVY INDUSTRIES

*Written by Don Fraser*

If a customer is looking for heavy fabricated, forged and cast-machined pieces, CMI Heavy Industries is sure to be on their go-to list.

The company, which has been around since 1922, is a custom-equipment builder with fabricating machining assembly, sandblast and paint facilities. It also has lifting capacity up to 80 tonnes at its 120,000 sq ft facility based in Stevensville.

CMI's core market is Canada, and the U.S., with those customers mainly in the steel, power generation, mining, and oil and gas sectors.

"We try to adapt to technology quickly and we have an exceptional group of employees that embrace change" said Shawn Rapone, CMI's controller. "Also, given the size of equipment we build, we have far fewer competitors."

CMI itself is 55-strong with revenues exceeding \$15 million-



plus per year, with the forecast looking strong.

"We've been growing 10-20% per year for the last decade," Rapone said. "The challenges are finding qualified skilled labour, but there are also a lot of people who are willing to be trained, which is good."

Being in Niagara has its plusses. Rapone points to Niagara as a close-knit industrial community, "where we all know each other and what we can do."

CMI has no intention of resting on its laurels, with labour-supply issues also pushing them to stay on top of their game.

"We'll have to adapt to newer technology to stay competitive, because of the skilled labour shortage," said Rapone. "And of course, it's always advantageous to have Brock University and Niagara College so close by." ■



**Through our membership we have great opportunities to network and share thoughts or ideas with other manufacturers and suppliers in the Niagara region. Whether it's an update on industry related issues and trends, or you are looking to make important business connections, NIA is a collaborative resource for its members."**

*Laurie Robert, Vice President, Sales & Marketing  
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**Niagara Falls**  
CANADA

# HAMILL MACHINE

Written by Don Fraser

From its beginnings in the late 1940's as a general machine shop, Hamill Machine has grown into a nimble, custom machine-fabricating business, with a stellar reputation in the food, wine and heavy industrial sectors.

Especially of note is its niche in the wine industry, building aluminum and custom barrel racks. Hamill has also made a mark in agriculture as a designer and builder of custom harvesters for the greenhouse industry. "It's our big thing now, they're basically selling all over the world," said company president Bob Benner.

Meanwhile, a developing Hamill business is also designing harvesting equipment for rapidly-expanding legal cannabis growers.

"That's next on our list," he says of a 15-employee Niagara Falls company that counts mechanical engineers, millwrights, welders and machinists among its staff. Its operations include CNC machining, machine design and building, millwrighting, dynamic balancing, fabricating, laser cutting and 3-D engineering.

Historically, Hamill has also leveraged targeted government research-development dollars, meaning if a customer comes to them with a problem, with that assistance in mind, "we pretty much always say yes," Benner said. "They tell us what it is they want. We use 3-D software to design that piece of equipment so we're all on the same page, then we get right down to the nuts-and-bolts of design."

Working with Niagara College programs to develop engineering solutions has also been a great advantage to Hamill, Benner adds: "They save us months of work, it's been huge for us." If there's an issue in Niagara, it's that sales have stayed consistent at about \$1.7 million per year over the last 15 years. "If none of our customers had left this area, my sales would be \$6 million by now," Benner said. "I like to say 'I have grown my business 10 times, even though my sales are the same.'"

There are signs, for certain, that things are picking up. Sales for barrel-racking products has gone gangbusters, Benner said: "It has a mind of its own now."

Overall, being in Niagara has its plusses, he says. For one, customers like making business trips to an area that is also a tourism hotspot. Hamill is also near the border, so it's easy to ship machines to the U.S., an advantage mentioned by many NIA members.

Hamill is also poised to add a 4,000 sq ft addition to their Kent



Avenue facility, and is able to farm more work out locally.

As for prevailing challenges, "the biggest is always government," Benner said, pointing—as several in these profiles—to new provincial labour and minimum wage laws that are pushing up payroll costs.

Getting money from banks to grow his business can also be a chore. "If I want to keep growing this year, I might have to go for private money."

Still, as for the future in Niagara, "I'm totally optimistic," Benner said. "I put off this expansion for 10 years, because I never felt the economy was good enough. Right now, the timing is right."

"I'd really like to get across that the future is bright, the economy is right. "We've all got to grab it." ■

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## **Q&A WITH VERNE**

(one of many valuable NIA resource members)

### **Q: What is Growth Associates?**

**A:** Growth Associates was devised as a way and means of applying a broad history of executive management experiences to the daily challenges of local businesses. Partnering my qualifications with the knowledge-base of owner-managers has resulted in some astonishing gains.

### **Q: What is your 'real secret' to achieving these breakthroughs?**

**A:** Implementing improvements in conventional areas like marketing, technology and strategy is certainly addressed, but attacking the root cause of organizational dysfunction is what creates truly extraordinary results. Implementing these changes through the creation of a tailored Business Operating System ensures that solutions are sustainable and, thereby, create strategic advantages for years to come.

### **Q: What is a Business Operating System?**

**A:** Simple and effective Business Operating Systems are fundamental to generating a self-sustaining growth engine. Properly implemented, it also becomes a self-repair mechanism, where a business owner can even step away from day-to-day operations and create a very attractive sellable asset.

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### WHAT NIA MEMBERS SAY:



*“Verne introduced an extremely effective system allowing us to develop a new management team, gain focus, and break through our ceiling.”*

**Tom Chopp, MANAGING PARTNER, SWS WARNING LIGHTS INC.**



*“We simply could not have managed our growth over the past five (5) years without Verne. He identified and implemented an outstanding operating system, which we use and rely on every day.”*

**Martin Lensink, FOUNDER & PRINCIPLE-IN-CHARGE, CEM ENGINEERING**



*“For many years we struggled to take our business to the next level. With Growth Associates’ guidance, we were able to design and implement a plan that not only took us there, but beyond. Our ongoing relationship with GA gives us the ability to manage our present and control our future.”*

**Len Stolk, PRESIDENT, STOLK CONSTRUCTION LTD.**



*“Verne was instrumental in our company growth and success. Our revenues have grown 4-fold since working with him.”*

**Scott Putman, PRESIDENT, IT FORCE (FORMERLY I/O VISION)**



*“Our firm can link a direct and tangible correlation from the time we partnered with Growth Associates to the consistent growth in sales and profitability that we’ve seen over a 5-year period. For me, the real benefit is achieving these results in a deep and meaningful partnership fashion, as opposed to a typical arms-length client/consultant relationship.”*

**Jordan Sherlock, PRESIDENT, NORTH AMERICA TRAFFIC INC.**



*“In a recent acquisition, Verne provided experienced advice and valuable strategic insight that has resulted in far fewer bumps along the road.”*

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*Peter Zylstra, P.Eng, President*



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Strategically located in the Niagara Region, Synchro Engineering Limited has been serving Southwestern Ontario with electrical engineering and contracting services since 1966.

Initially incorporated as an electrical contracting firm specializing in industrial maintenance, repairs and installations, Synchro expanded its portfolio to include electrical engineering and engineering services over a decade ago. Over the years, Synchro has developed a solid reputation for engineering expertise involving all types of end-uses: power systems, green energy, automation, panel builds, equipment service and general electrical contracting.

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# The Violin Group



*Tim Hortons Field, Hamilton*

## PURSUE PERFECTION. NOTHING LESS.

In 2008, Mike Violin, a successful electrician and project manager, took a dinner napkin and wrote a stylized version of his name on the back. With that napkin, metaphorically grasped in his hand, Mike set off on a mission to fulfill an ambitious dream. The Violin Group was born.

The organization's relentless pursuit of perfection is the common theme behind three distinct lines of business at The Violin Group. The first, Violin Construction, started in 2008 as wireless telecommunication contractors; specializing in Distributed Antenna Systems (DAS), small cell, PICO cell and rooftop installations. In 2012, Violin Electric was established as a commercial/industrial electrical contractor. Finally, Violin Power Solutions was formed in 2015 as experts in energy conservation (LED lighting retrofits) and renewable power generation projects with a focus on solar power.



*One of our aerial technicians taking in the view in Toronto*

The three distinct lines of business allow The Violin Group to take on a wide variety of unique jobs that continually challenge the team. In addition to the company being a strong proponent of Niagara and its business community, The Violin Group offers its suite of services throughout Ontario. The Violin Group has been a member of the Niagara Industrial Association since 2014, with project manager Kevin Hooiveld as an active board member.

The Violin Group has an uncompromising pursuit of perfection – balancing the classic principles and methodologies of construction services with leading edge technologies over multiple industries. Right from our leaders to our newest employees, Mike's original passion and spontaneity still motivates The Violin Group today. The team's work ethic drives projects that break barriers, defy expectations and challenge the status quo. The company is extremely proud of its body of work that is precise, elegant and of the utmost quality.





*Bigwin Island, Muskoka*

## VIOLIN GROUP IN ACTION!

### **Pursuing Perfection - Southbrook Vineyards**

Southbrook Vineyards is located in picturesque Niagara-on-the-Lake in the heart of Niagara's fruit belt. As Canada's first certified organic and biodynamic winery, as well as the only LEED Gold certified winery; Southbrook's entire 156-acre estate is committed to minimizing their environmental footprint. It is for that reason that they hand-picked The Violin Group to enact upon the final phase of their conservation vision.

Being mindful of soil, water and livestock sensitivities, The Violin Group designed, procured, installed and commissioned Niagara's largest net-meter solar PV system all without any ground penetrations nor the use of any materials that could leach toxic materials into the delicate water shed.

With the support of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, Niagara College and Brock University, The Violin Group also created an exclusive event for students to come 'on-site' at

Southbrook and have the unique opportunity to learn hands-on about how renewable power generation and biodynamic farming can go hand-in-hand.

This distinctive design, combined with a fresh approach to learning for the next generation of Niagara's work force has resulted in the honour of The Violin Group receiving several awards from our local environmental, educational and business communities.

Commissioned in the summer of 2017, the 136kW net meter solar system now provides Southbrook Vineyards with over 75% of their electrical requirements and has already saved 121 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, or the equivalent of powering 18 homes and saving over 3,000 trees!

### **Nothing Less - Hilton Hotel, Niagara Falls**

The Violin Group is also a tier 1 contractor for Canada's largest telecom companies. One their most recent projects was on Niagara Fall's very own Hilton Hotel roof top. It was a daunting project that involved a full overhaul of the existing cellular installation to newer technology. Although the roof top views were obviously spectacular, this project was riddled with challenges from start to finish. This latest technology involves a mix of many components all mounted to various new structural support elements. This installation included almost 200 pieces of electronic equipment, over 2 kilometres of fibre optic cabling, multi-band large antennas, thousands of feet of RF cabling and over 500 hundred connectors to interconnect it all!

This site will now offer superior coverage in the whole Niagara tourism core for years to come. "We are proud of this site's final product and it is all thanks to our talented dedicated team," says Mike Violin, president and founder. He continues, "we are a family at work, who all bear down and contribute to get the job done for our customers. From our office support staff, our project managers and our front line foremen and technicians we all diligently work together to ensure customer satisfaction. That is our common goal."



*Southbrook Vineyards, Niagara-on-the-Lake*

“

The NIA has provided ASW an opportunity to routinely network with other manufacturing and service-based businesses in Niagara. The presentations during Membership Meetings have been enlightening, and the topics discussed are focused on helping businesses succeed.”

Tim Clutterbuck, President  
ASW Steel Inc., Welland

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## COMPANIES

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Companies in this sector are generally involved in manufacturing industrial and commercial machinery. These firms assemble parts into components, subassemblies and complete machines: They may make the parts themselves, using general metal-working processes, or purchase them.



## CAN-ENG FURNACES

*Written by Don Fraser*

Canada's largest designer and manufacturer of industrial furnace systems has set the standard globally for developing innovative and state-of-the-art processing systems, supplying a range of industrial sectors, from automotive, to aerospace, foundries, forging and oil and gas.

CAN-ENG Furnaces International Ltd. was founded in 1964 by Wally Bamford and Art Neufeld, who had a passion for thermal engineered systems and a vision to capitalize on the need during Canada's booming industrial sector. "Since then, we have supplied engineered-to-order thermal processing systems to 17 different countries around the world," said Tim Donofrio, who is vice-president of sales. "And we are the largest industrial furnace builder in Canada with capability to supply a wide array of complex, high volume systems that support large manufacture." CAN-ENG has recently supported a local company Welded Tube of Canada, located in Welland, Ontario. A manufacturer of Oil Country Tubular Goods (OCTG) tube and casing which is used by oil and gas companies to extract resources such as shale gas and oil from underground. This impressive manufacturing facility is one of a handful in Canada and supplies products across North America.

CAN-ENG currently employs a staff of 100 people as well as over 50 local suppliers and subcontractors. CAN-ENG's manufacturing and engineering site is located in Niagara Falls



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and in addition manufacturing satellite facility in Welland.

Donofrio said CAN-ENG is very fortunate to employ a large engineering and manufacturing pool of talented professionals that has enabled the company to “develop very unique systems, which are customized and highly automated for high-volume processing.”

“The company itself doesn’t have any significant Canadian competition” he said, adding that it mostly found in the U.S. and Europe. As such, CAN-ENG has to focus on developing its talent pool in-house.

“We focus on developing systems that deliver to our customers the lowest cost of ownership,” Donofrio said. “We develop very-efficient heating systems, that reduce the amount of energy needed to operate, reduce the manpower requirements through robotic integration while also integrating floor-space reductions.

To complement its services, CAN-ENG has developed a 5,000 sq ft Research and Development Facility in Niagara Falls. “Here we can completely validate a new design, before we ever put it into mass production,” he said. “Our customers, such as Ford and GM have relied upon CAN-ENG to provide this value-added service, and in fact we supported the recent launch of the F-150 all-aluminum truck. Playing a major role in the validation testing of new thermal treated aluminum components integrated into this vehicle and providing validation testing, contributed to the successful launch of that program.”

Donofrio recognized, as have others, that finding the right skilled positions can be a challenge in Niagara. “We face all the struggles everybody else does: rising taxes, rising energy costs and finding the right talent,” he said. “But all told, CAN-ENG has positioned itself well to service our customers with advanced technologies that provide added value,” says Donofrio. ■

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Empire Prime Developments is the Prime Way Group's property re-development division. Empire Prime's latest project, the revitalization of Welland's historic Cotton Mill Complex, continues to bring numerous new businesses to the city's largest industrial mall.



Offering customer space to businesses throughout Niagara and surrounding areas, Empire Prime works to grow Welland's small business sector.

*To discuss development opportunities please contact Keith Cumming at 905-380-5445 & Larry Marconi, Broker, RE/MAX Active Realty, Inc. at 905-246-5954*



**"We want to get more involved with the community."**

*Scott Cherevaty, General Manager*

## MOYER DIEBEL

*Written by Don Fraser*



Moyer Diebel Ltd. has a storied history in Niagara, tracing its Jordan Station roots back to 1945. Eventually the operation moved from a barn into the current Avondale building, on the side of the QEW, which endured a handful of additions over the many years.

"It was a couple Royal Canadian Air Force Engineers, Art Moyer and Howard Diebel who were into metalworking and sonar," said company general manager Scott Cherevaty. "They left the military and decided to get into fabrication in the Niagara region."

In the 70's, vending machines lead production volumes for Moyer, employing more than 300 employees. The metalworking shop also painted parts for John Deere and did other local fabrications, including food-service equipment.

Cripplingly-high interest rates, a sharp recession, and rapid transitions in the vending machine sector, made the business a struggle.

By 1980, the company — now renowned for its commercial dishwashers and glasswashers — Moyer built and moved into its current location in Jordan Station, Lincoln.

Eventually, it was sold to Canadian Pacific, who sold off pieces of the business "making it a shell of its former stature" after it was stripped down, said Cherevaty. In 1989 the current parent company, Ali Group, a family owned business, acquired the firm, which now has more than 100 people on its payroll.

The turnaround was solid, and Moyer is now a strong player in its specialized field, with robust sales across the continent. Walk into any bar, casino, tavern and hotel in Canada, and it's almost certain to have a Moyer Diebel glasswasher on duty.

"Ali Group is definitely the largest family-owned food equipment manufacturer in the world, and arguably the

largest, period," Cherevaty said. Locally, ongoing challenges are finding experienced employees, staying competitive with rising expenses while keeping an eye to the price-point product offering. Proximity to the U.S. is also vital, as a large percentage of its business ships outside of Canada.

"I can't deny that steel tariffs (coming from U.S. President Donald Trump's administration) aren't impacting us at this point," he adds. "If tariffs got more stringent, it would obviously be very concerning." Cherevaty stresses an overall positive Canadian identity is also part of their branding.

"I can certainly say we are proud to be Canadian, and that is part of our marketing strategy in Canada." Moyer Diebel is also Niagara-proud, and does considerable local business sourcing and networking.

"We want to get more involved with the community," Cherevaty said. "And since I've been involved (with the Niagara Industrial Association), it's allowed me to recognize that others are facing the same challenges that I am."

"So, being united as part of the NIA is very important to us and will continue to be as we grow in the coming years." ■

A graphic for the Southern Niagara Chambers of Commerce. It features a blue background with a white border. At the top, there are four logos: Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce, Greater Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce, Port Colborne-Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce, and Welland-Pelham Chamber of Commerce. Below these logos, the text "Your Southern Niagara Chambers of Commerce" is written in a large, bold, white font. At the bottom, the text "Growing your business, your community, your region." is written in a smaller, white font.





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## JOBS

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## COMPANIES

**15**

This industry relates to businesses primarily engaged in smelting and refining ferrous and non-ferrous metals from ore, pig or scrap in blast or electric furnaces. Metal alloys are made with the introduction of other chemical elements. The output of smelting and refining, usually in ingot form, is used in rolling and drawing operations to produce sheet, strip, bars, rods and wire, and in molten form to produce castings and other basic metal products.



## ASW STEEL

*Written by Don Fraser*

From the remnants of a former Welland steel giant, a retooled phoenix of Niagara manufacturing arose. ASW Steel Inc., as it is now known, has an enduring history in the Rose City.

It was built in 1918 by Dillon Crucible Steel Alloy Company to produce high tensile tool steel. In 1920, the Atlas Crucible Steel Company bought it.

At its height in 1948, Atlas was considered the largest specialty steel company in the British Commonwealth, employing 3,000 people and exporting across the globe. Cheap power, robust demand, access to water and good transportation, a reliable labour pool, all helped make the former Atlas a powerhouse.

Through subsequent chapters and ownership-turns, market conditions saw its fortunes decline in the 2000s. Atlas, as it was, would eventually fold. It was a huge blow to Niagara's old-school industrial sector and a major employment shock for Welland.

About a decade ago, ASW president Tim Clutterbuck became reacquainted with the operation's remnants, after he'd been



away for about a decade. The private equity owners of the old Atlas — then known as MMFX — brought Clutterbuck into the fold and worked with him to develop a plan focusing on the facility's marketable strengths.

"I was asked to come back, to explore a start-up of this shuttered facility," he said of ASW, which now does about \$100 million in revenue per year and has 130 employees.

"The business had changed dramatically from when I left in 2000, to when I came back in 2010," he said. When he re-entered, essentially all that was left of the behemoth was a melt shop and chemistry lab. Those rolling mills, forges, finishing areas, were all gone.

Still, Clutterbuck realized the cache of the facility was its capacity to make in-demand speciality steel products, like stainless steel, alloys, and complex steels requiring high-end refinement.

"That's really what sets us apart from many other melt shops in North America," he said. "We have a rather unique facility here, which fits into a market that is underserved."

To that end, key to ASW's niche is most customers don't have their own melt and refining shops, as it's a very capital-intensive operation. Here, ASW finds its place.

"We focused on these specialties; on oil and gas, aerospace, nuclear, automotive to some degree and transportation," Clutterbuck said. "They need our specialized steel products."

As with other companies profiled, ASW Steel is also well positioned to build its business continentally in Niagara, with borders becoming "more or less invisible" with Free Trade Agreements, and "hopefully that continues," he said. Ongoing challenges are high hydro rates, government regulations for SME's, pressure on the tax base, and to some degree, a tightening labour market.

It's also a daunting business climate, with cheap imports, and steel production on a major wane in the Golden Horseshoe. Clutterbuck has faith in the future and sees his company's impressive position.

"Yes, it's been a changed environment, but running a speciality steel shop is unique and this gives us a fairly strong foothold in North America. High value products travel better."

"I'd say we're still in an extremely healthy position," he said. "If you do the things you have to do, you can stay competitive. It takes ingenuity and creativity, but you can do it." ■

**"It takes ingenuity and creativity, but you can do it."**

*Tim Clutterbuck, President*



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# PENINSULA ALLOY

Written by Don Fraser



Peninsula Alloy is digging deep to cast a huge reputation in the foundry business. The company, established in 1982, was purchased by its current owner Roger Heise in 1996. At the time, it produced high-quality castings but had a limited maximum casting capability.

Peninsula, which now has an international client base, is a Stevensville steel foundry that makes carbon, stainless, alloy and duplex alloy steels. Among other offerings are ductile iron and chrome iron castings.

It is currently part of PAX Foundry and Machining Group, with three foundries and two machining facilities in Canada and China, boasting casting from one to 520,000 lbs. Corporate alliances and group connections like this, which focus on core competencies at each site, are a recurring theme in Niagara's industrial new wave.

A major Peninsula product is the making of ground engagement castings for Caterpillar, sold through a third party, destined for the surface mining industry. Some are beasts: Peninsula's biggest cast tip, rock-chewing tooth is part of a bucket enormous enough to wheel a bus onto. Peninsula counts itself as the only producer for Otis Elevator of specialized safety blocks that prevent an elevator from accidentally falling. Peninsula also makes pump cases for the oil and gas industry. Other industries that require specialized casting come to Peninsula Alloy for their expertise in making quality castings.

Their current biggest file is for Howden Australia. "We currently have a large order to make blades for exhaust fans for underground mines," said Vince Skinner, the company's manager sales and marketing. These blades are being shipped to India and Mongolia. With all these heavy orders comes the standard issue — human resource needs.

Peninsula has 55 employees working for a firm with annual revenues of \$10 million per year. It is growing and digging for

the right staff.

"One problem we have, at the moment, is finding good people," said Skinner, echoing a recurring theme by others in this magazine special. "This is a concern." Meanwhile, being in Niagara confers an obvious geographical benefit in hugging the border, and Skinner says that's a business Peninsula is continuing to ramp up.

"We can tell American clients we are just seven kilometres from the Peace Bridge, and they ask us, 'uh, what's seven kilometres,'" Skinner said, with a chuckle.

Another emerging great prospect for the company has come from working with a Chinese partner, which makes oversized steel castings that can't be done locally and a high speed iron foundry.

"We just started this last year. It's still something that's in progress," Skinner said. "We can make steel castings as large as 520,000 pounds each. "After we give the inquiry to the Chinese affiliate, they will quote us and we'll quote our customer. Our customer, who knows where the castings come from, pays us in Canadian dollars. We bring the casting to our facility and do the final inspection.

"Then, we ship it from Peninsula Alloy to our customer," he said. "For our clients here, we've made this seamless." ■



Canada

**Anna Piekarska, M.A.**

Account Manager  
Ontario Region

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# “

The NIA is a valuable networking tool for manufacturing in Niagara. LaurCoat Inc. has benefitted from the creation of new business throughout Niagara and beyond due to contacts made here. The NIA has provided an avenue to connect with new suppliers that has led to the improvement of efficiencies and service.”

*Michael Laur, President  
LaurCoat Inc., Niagara Falls*



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Dilts Piston Hydraulics was formed in 1988 and has remained rooted in its Niagara base since the beginning. Starting in Port Colborne, Dilts Piston quickly outgrew its walls and moved north to Allanburg and then again expanding into its first St. Catharines location only to finally settle into our current location at 10 Cushman Road almost 15 years ago. While we are known for our 24/7 emergency repair service and specializing in hydraulic, pneumatic and lube systems, Dilts also has a full house of licensed mechanics ready for your next work order! We are very competitive with our one-off or small batch manual machining and have a machinist and a toolmaker on hand at all times. Our millwrights and technicians are well versed in fabrication and assembly, troubleshooting and machine repair services.

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# NIAGARA CANADA'S BUSINESS CASE JUST KEEPS ON GROWING

While Niagara, Canada may be known as a popular tourist destination, thanks to a strong collection of competitive advantages for businesses, a growing number of companies are choosing to make their journey to the region a one-way trip.

Affordable land, unique and generous financial incentives, competitively priced utilities and taxes, low healthcare costs and a highly efficient logistics infrastructure make a serious impact on the bottom line for businesses located in Niagara, Canada. How big? Niagara, Canada's business cost index was lower than 76 American jurisdictions and the second lowest in Ontario in a 2016 study by KPMG.

## A PRIME LOCATION FOR GLOBAL SHIPPING SUCCESS

Niagara, Canada's position in the centre of a bi-national mega region known as the Great Lakes Megalopolis offers the perfect location for making connections with the largest economy in North America. A whopping \$100 billion of trade flows through Niagara, Canada each year and half of North America's population is within a one-day drive. Four major highways, five international bridge crossings, three railways, a direct connection to the St. Lawrence Seaway through the Welland Canal, and six airports within a short drive offer companies multiple options for getting products to markets near and far.

## WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH EXPERTISE

According to research by KPMG, Niagara, Canada is one of North America's top 20 centres for access to competitive research and development. Companies located in Niagara, Canada can partner with world-class researchers at institutes and incubators at Niagara College, Brock University, McMaster University, Mohawk College and the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre to develop new approaches to propel their business into the future.

## ONLY-IN-NIAGARA CANADA INCENTIVES

In today's global marketplace, every penny matters. That's why Niagara, Canada regularly benchmarks other cities and asks, "How can we offer more?" Answering that question led to the creation of the Niagara Gateway Economic Zone Improvement Plan Incentive. Niagara is the only community in Ontario with an incentive of this kind that offers companies who invest in developing and diversifying designated zones across the region aggressive tax rebates and development charge grants. Just how generous? Between 2015 and September 2017, over C\$36 million in Gateway incentives were granted to Niagara, Canada businesses.

## A TALENT POOL THAT GETS THE JOB DONE

Niagara, Canada offers access to a highly skilled workforce of 229,000, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. Thanks to great highways, growing public transit options and seamless border crossings, there are over 1.85 million people that live within commuting distance of the region. ■





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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.

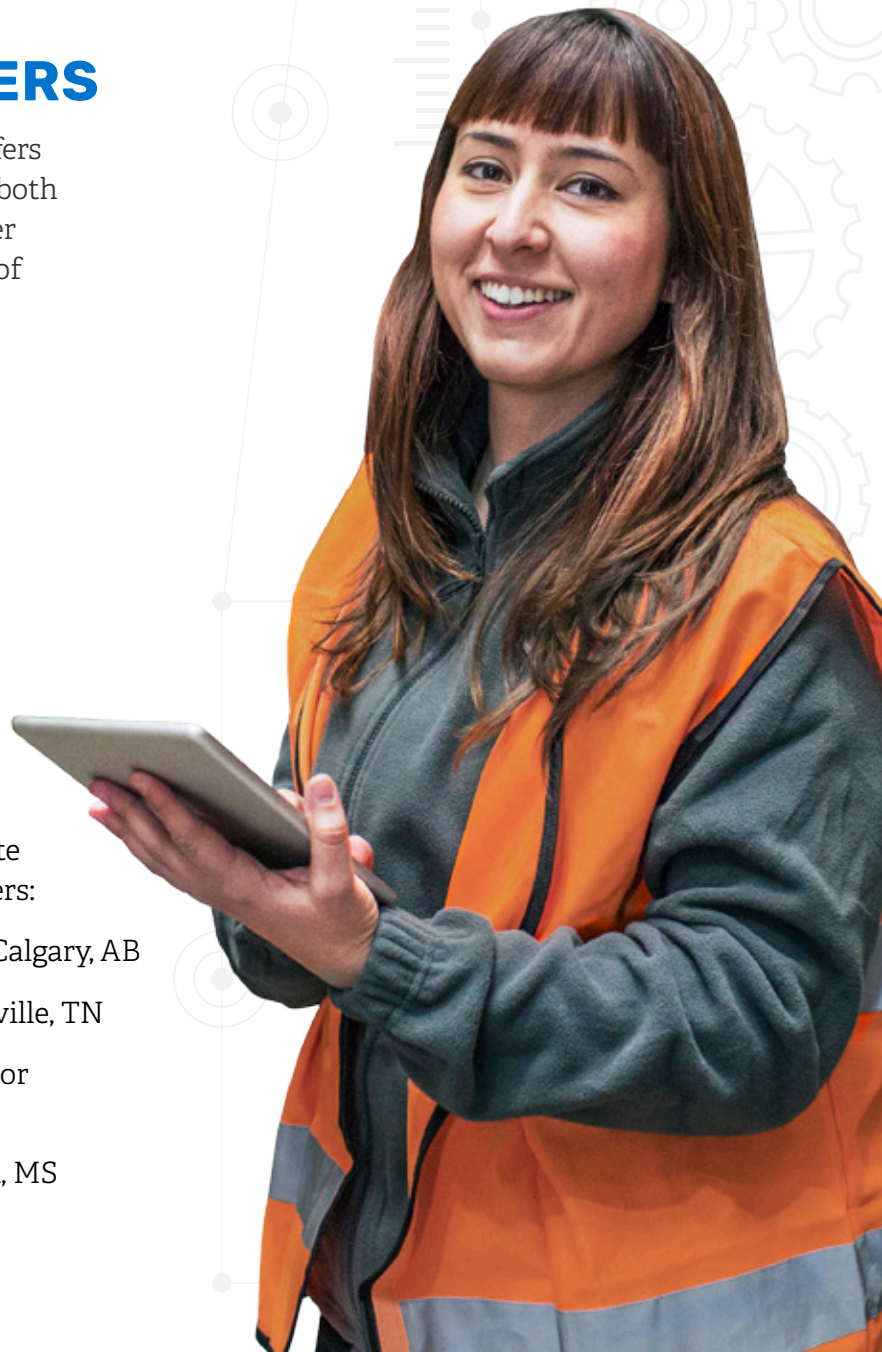
## GROUP BENEFITS

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:

- Canadian Energy Supply Chain Forum, Calgary, AB
- Southern Automotive Conference, Nashville, TN
- Meetings in Munich, Germany with Senior Trade Officials
- Southern Automotive Conference, Biloxi, MS





## 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

# WHY I SIT ON THE BOARD

**"As an economic development professional in Niagara, I recognize the vital importance of the manufacturing sector to Niagara's economy. The NIA provides a venue to support a large number of manufacturing and industrial companies in our work. I really enjoy being involved with the NIA, our achievements, and the comradery that I feel being at the board table."**

*Blake Landry, Manager, Economic Research & Analysis  
Niagara Economic Development*

**"I consider it a privilege to be part of the leadership team promoting the sustainability and growth of manufacturing in Niagara."**

*R. Roy Timms, P.Eng., G.S.C.- Past Chair of the NIA  
President, Timbro Design Build Contractors*

**"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.*

**"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*

**"Sitting on the board allows me the opportunity to connect with my community from a much more strategic position. Rather than 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, Project Manager  
The Violin Group*

**"With over 35 years of experience, working within the manufacturing sector and the direct operational input I have conveyed on a local manufacturing facility, has compelled me to offer my time and efforts to sit on the NIA Board as well as share some of my outside board 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 experiential opportunities, increase networking opportunities and a chance for me to make a difference in the operational and manufacturing sector in Niagara. Giving back to the local community should not be requested, but should be a life-long requirement for each and every one of us."**

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

**"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*





**Back row from left to right:** Jordan Sherlock, Larry Anderson, Ian Hill, Verne Milot

**Front row from left to right:** Blake Landry, Jane Buunk, Roy Timms, Bruno Iafrate (Treasurer), Aaron Tisdelle (Chair), Don Cyr (Vice Chair), Adam Joon, Kevin Hooiveld, Wendy Smith (Administrator).

**"As a manufacturer in Niagara I want to ensure the growth of my company in an environment and region that will accept my growth expectations. Growth takes investment, I want to ensure that my investment is directed in the right direction whether time or money! The NIA Board is where I can ensure my investment and that of my fellow industrial business owners within our region can be heard loud and clear to industry, government and community."**

*Ian Hill, President  
Dilts Piston Hydraulics Inc.*

**"As a proud member of the NIA and a proud Niagara business owner it is a privilege to sit on the Niagara Industrial Association Board of Directors. It gives me the opportunity to learn about and support Niagara industry, the people that drive it and the services that support it. Sitting on the Board also allows me the opportunity to give back to my community on a personal and professional level. It is with great pride that I count myself a member of the NIA and it with a humble heart that I sit as Chair of the board, always willing to listen and learn from my fellow Niagara partners."**

*Aaron Tisdelle, President  
Girotti Machine*

**"As a life-long resident of Niagara, and a small business owner, I am heavily interested and invested in its success. The NIA is dedicated to securing a solid future for the Region and I'm proud to be a part of it."**

*Larry Anderson, CEO  
Larry Anderson Consultants*

**"NIA is a vibrant and growing organization that provides a relevant contribution to the health and sustainability of Niagara manufacturing. As a "voice of manufacturing" we protect our best interests all the while contributing positively to our communities, province and country. Besides, the NIA BOD is a great bunch of hardworking entrepreneurs with lots of vision and positive spirit...we do have fun."**

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


**"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. I am excited about the future of manufacturing in Niagara."**

*Jane Buunk, Co President  
Niagara Precision Limited*

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*Caroline Mann, VP Finance  
Haver & Boecker Canada*

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~Linda Grimo – Grimo Nut Nurseries

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~Dan Kircos – WallSmarts



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