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**Rebound underway: Teamwork key to success**

**Windsor, ON -** Teamwork in Windsor-Essex County has had tremendous impact for Canadian manufacturing.

Along with the positive news this week of the retraction of tariffs on Canadian aluminum imports, there is also evidence that manufacturing sector, while initially hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis, has returned to growth and focused on diversification.

For six months representatives from industry associations: Canadia Association of Moldmakers (CAMM) and Automate Canada, in partnership with the Canadian Tooling and Machining Association (CTMA) and the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation (WE EDC) have teamed up and the payoff has been great.

Surveys from the last six months have provided a wealth of information to allow for much advocacy and progress. Since March, this group has collaborated on periodic impact surveys of the manufacturing sector, coordinated a series of webinars on topics of particular interest to manufacturers ranging from mental health in the workplace to overcoming challenges crossing the Canada/US border, as well as releasing a guidebook.

 “Windsor-Essex is fortunate to have what I believe to be the most coordinated, collaborative and engaged industry participants in the country,” says Stephen MacKenzie, President and CEO, WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation.

“From responding to threats such as the imposition of tariffs or the impact of COVID-19, to providing research and testimony to Ministers and parliamentary committees to inform National policy decisions, these organizations (CAMM, CTMA and Automate Canada) convene or participate in task forces and working groups designed to address issues that may impact the industry.”

CAMM Board chair Mike Bilton says the work of the group has helped pull back the curtain on how manufacturing is indeed an essential service. “In spite of the difficulties that continue with the border closure and even COVID-19 cases, as an industry we are banding together and finding workarounds and learning to function under new conditions, says Bilton.

 Several months into this crisis, manufacturers have resumed operations, returned employees to the workplace and have focused on planning for doing business in a greatly altered landscape, with access to their most important export market – the United States – hampered due to border closures

Automate Canada Chair Shelley Fellows says the surveys have now ended but not without providing such a wealth of data to pull from.

“Our surveys have shown us that manufacturers in Canada are extraordinarily resilient,” notes Fellows “The US tariffs and planned retaliatory tariffs threatened by Canada on US imports would have hit our sector with another economic blow, setting us back considerably in our recovery. We are delighted that this issue has been resolved and no longer hangs over our heads”.

MacKenzie agrees.

“We were very pleased to learn that the U.S. chose to refrain from imposing the 10 percent tariff on aluminum imported from Canada, which in turn eliminated the need for Canada to impose retaliatory tariffs on U.S. aluminum and aluminum-containing
products. Advanced manufacturing, including the machine, tool, die and mold industry is the largest cluster in our region, and trade barriers of this nature would definitely have had a negative impact on our companies, our consumers and the overall economy.”

CAMM, Automate Canada, CTMA and WE EDC partnered early in 2020 in response to the emerging COVID-19 crisis as a “manufacturing sector task force”, part of a greater regional economic task force spearheaded by WE EDC.

Providing essential services for the Canadian economy, manufacturers initial halted or slowed operations and laid off large numbers of employees, using government programs like the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) to preserve employee numbers and protect cash flow.

CAMM and Automate Canada leadership continue to meet regularly including meeting twice weekly as part of the Windsor Essex Regional Economic Task force.

Automate Canada and (CAMM) conducted surveys of the mold, tool, die & industrial automation sectors in Canada weekly in March, April & May, and monthly into early fall. They have connected with these essential businesses vital to restarting Canada’s economic engine and have regularly communicated with all levels of government to present information regarding this vital sector. Given the stabilization of the manufacturing sector with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, these impact surveys will no longer be released.

***CAMM is a not-for-profit industry driven association focusing on the Canadian mold making sector of Canada. Automate Canada is a not-for-profit industry driven association focusing on the industrial automation and advanced manufacturing technology sectors of Canada. Both are based in Windsor, Ontario and are affiliated with the Auto Parts Manufacturers Association (APMA) in Canada and Automation Alley in Michigan, USA.***

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