



## NTMA TECHNICAL CONFERENCE REPORT

February 4 – 8, 2007  
Coronado, California, USA

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Mr. Leslie Payne represented the CTMA at the National Tooling & Machining Association's (NTMA) Annual Meeting & Technical Conference entitled "*Filling The Pipeline – Building a Skilled, Productive and Loyal Workforce for the Future*" that was held in Coronado, California, USA (near San Diego), February 4 – 8, 2007. He also represented Canada at an Americas regional International Special Tooling & Machining Association (ISTMA) meeting that was held in conjunction with the conference.

### **NTMA CONFERENCE:**

This NTMA Annual Meeting and Technical Conference attracted almost 250 delegates for the full 5 days of meetings and presentations. Roy and Luella Verstraete of Anchor Danly were also in attendance from Canada.

Unlike the current business conditions within Canada, business conditions in the USA have improved and the Americans are once again having a problem attracting highly skilled workers to the tooling industry due to the following:

- An aging workforce that is planning for retirement
- Fewer young people entering the machining trades
- Impact of American immigration policies on the workforce
- A diversity of cultures and work ethics

The main theme of the conference was to assist companies develop a business strategy to build and maintain a skilled, productive and loyal workforce for the future.

### **Manufacturing Technology Presentations:**

*Thomas Raun – Iscar Metals Inc.:* Latest tool and cutter technology being applied in the manufacture and machining of composite materials.

*Olaf Tessarzyk – CEO of Index Corporation:* Benefits of mill turning by combining single step process of turning machines with full 5-axis machining centres.

Industry Round Table Discussions:

Three separate round table discussions were conducted for the Special Machine industry; the Tool & Die / Moulds industry; and the Precision Machining industry. The purpose was to explore trends and conditions in the various industry sectors, discuss common problems, and seek solutions by exchanging experiences. Topics discussed included business conditions, the impact of foreign competition, terms & conditions, progress payments, quality expectations, shortage of skilled employees, finding/training employees and future industry trends.

Economic Overview with Emphasis on Workforce Development Issues:

*Jeff Thredgold – President of Thredgold Economic Associates:* Covered the following topics:

- Why inflation will remain under control.
- Why tight labour conditions will impact companies.
- Why retirement at 65 will give way to “bridging”.
- Why in terms of technology ... “*You ain’t seen nothin’ yet!*”

Managing Age Diversity in Today’s Workforce:

*Bob Wendover – Director of Centre for Generational Studies:* Today’s employees are far different from those of the past and employers need to understand the values and attitudes of new and younger employees as well as experienced workers.

Best Practices in Workforce Development:

*Jeff Stoller – Deputy Executive Director of Heldrich Centre, Rutgers University (New Jersey):* Discussion on challenges, development, key successes, job readiness, outreach, career connections and best practices.

**ISTMA-AMERICAS MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Details for representation at the ISTMA-World Conference being held June 9 to 13, 2007 in Joensuu, Finland were discussed. A visit to St. Petersburg, Russia and Tallinn, Estonia will also be included
- The Minutes from the meeting in Chicago in 2006 and the January 2007 Financial Report were approved.
- Legal entity for ISTMA-Americas to be explored here in Canada.
- Australia and one other USA association may join ISTMA-Americas region.
- ISTMA-Americas Business Conditions Survey deadline (for period ending December 31, 2006) is February 9, 2007.

- 2010 World Conference location was discussed with the following points being noted:
  - a) International Pattern-Modelmakers to participate within the 2010 conference
  - b) Need to communicate with the ISTMA-World Executive for more direction on this issue
  - c) NTMA and CTMA will seek the opinion of each association's Board for further direction prior to making a recommendation to host this conference (or not).
- Copies of CTMA's 2007 Buyers Guide & Membership Capability Index were distributed.
- Commitment by Harry Moser of Agie Charmilles Corp. to again provide the grand prize to the employer of the winning apprentice in the CTMA's 2007 Apprenticeship Competition.

### **COMMENTS:**

The USA has been Canada's biggest trading partner in the past and this will continue in the future. Due to our currency rates, the Canadian tooling industry remained busy over the last 5 years while the American tooling sector was declining by almost 30%. This trend has reversed itself since 2006.

Other than the auto sector and the Michigan area, many other locations within the USA tooling sector report busy workloads. A company owner in the state of New York recently stated that he is having to compete with companies such as Boeing for skilled machinists and as a result they are having to pay as much as \$30.00 USD per hour just to keep them.

It is reasonable to expect that the Canadian tooling industry will recover from its current contraction to the same levels as the American tooling industry – it is just a matter of when? Currency rates play an important part in the overall level of manufacturing activity – certainly as it relates to world competitive tooling.

The relationship between the NTMA and the CTMA has always provided a window of knowledge and information on the American tooling industry – one which continues to be of vital importance to the well being of the Canadian tooling industry in general and CTMA members in particular.

*Submitted By:*

*Leslie Payne, Executive Director, CTMA  
February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007*