

# Dilast Tool & Die Ltd.: Celebrating Success, Expanding its Reach

By Adam Johnston

**FOR NEARLY 23 YEARS, DILAST** Tool & Die Ltd. has used its experience, skills and knowledge to create excellent stamping dies for the automotive industry.

The company was founded in 1993 in the municipality of Cambridge, ON, in the Kitchener-Waterloo region. Founded by four tool and die makers looking to make an impact within the industry, Dilast Tool & Die has changed and evolved over the years. Of the original four owners, one remains, along with current operations manager, Denny Nedeljkovich, who is at the helm.

Despite the changes, Dilast Tool & Die continues to grow. The company added on to its plant over a year ago, expanding the 12,500-square-foot building by an additional 10,500 square feet.

The services provided by Dilast Tool & Die match the company's current operations and extend into their future vision, as they look to expand into other avenues. Currently, Dilast specializes in high-quality progressive, custom, compound, and transfer dies for the automotive industry, but the company is looking to expand its reach into production. Dilast recently added a 5-axis laser, which will help diversify its business.

"Three-dimensional laser cutting was hard to find," says Nedeljkovich, adding that by including a 5-axis laser machine in its operations, the company could



*A Takumi H32 bridge type mill with great capacity (77.0 in the Y axis and 126.0 in the X axis).*

capitalize on the 3-D laser market within the region because it would cut travel time for customers who would normally go to Toronto or Windsor for their cutting needs.

"We want to expand the business to include more than just dies," says Nedeljkovich.

While Dilast Tool & Die is celebrating its success and is now looking to expand its business, it does not mean the company hasn't seen its fair share of challenges along the way. One such challenge is a common one faced by other businesses within the tool and die industry—finding skilled tradesmen.

"The industry took a big hit from 2004 to 2010," says Nedeljkovich. "We knew a lot of companies closed down. We knew a lot of people got out of the industry and went into something different."

The mass exodus of workers starting in 2008 partially contributed to the skilled trades gap that many companies are facing today. Dilast put out ads last year, yet could not find skilled workers to fill their needs for everyday operations. Nedeljkovich suggests the lack of promoting industrial trades within the education system has also hampered finding skilled workers.

Despite these challenges, Nedeljkovich is very optimistic on the future of the industry



*A brand new Komatsu TLM610 5-axis laser cuts costs and time during the die development process.*

as the company looks to remain strong and successful.

"Dilast will continue to expand infrastructure to support tooling and production (lasers and presses)," says Nedeljkovich, also suggesting that the company's engineering department may expand further within the next year or two. Recently, Dilast added transfer simulation to its engineering toolbox. With this new software, you can see the virtual transfer in motion and detect any interferences and correct them right at the design stage, saving valuable press time.

A proud member of the Canadian Tooling & Machining Association (CTMA), Dilast Tool & Die has seen positive benefits since obtaining membership to the association. One of the useful benefits that the company has been grateful for is access to the CTMA's training courses, which have already helped Dilast attract skilled workers.

"By the time they get trained, these people have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful," says Nedeljkovich.

Dilast is also incredibly thankful for the tremendous opportunities that CTMA membership provides through access to various events, including a recent dinner that highlighted key issues and opportunities, like government incentives to help grow your company's operations.

As it makes its way into the future, Dilast Tool & Die will continue to grow, expand its reach, and see success in its everyday operations. ■■



*Dilast's newest press addition, a 220-ton SEYI variable speed (0-72 strokes per minute) with full automation capabilities.*



*Dilast recently added a feed line with a de-coiler that can handle up to 10,000 pounds. The servo drive feeder can run up to 36.0" wide material.*