

# Contracts, education result from trade mission

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STAFF WRITER

Oakland County businessman Ed Myles used to dread sending his company's technical service employees to perform work across the border in Canada. Without exception, the workers were detained when they stated the nature of their business - repairing testing equipment that Troy-based Control Power-Reliance makes and supplies.

One trip resulted in the confiscation of some of the company's instrumentation, not to mention three-hour delays on both sides of the border.

"You could probably lie about it, but, if you told the truth, a road block immediately went up," said Myles, who is the president of Control Power-Reliance. Customs officials probably suspected an attempt to recruit Canadian laborers, he said.

Myles no longer worries about delays. In fact, as of last week, other similar barriers to successful venturing in the country fell away for eight other Oakland County companies.

Joining Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and former Michigan Gov. James Blanchard, representatives from the companies participated in a two-day trade mission in Toronto.

Although the Oct. 6-7 forum primarily sought to help county businesses make potential industry contacts by prearranging one-hour meetings with compatible firms, a series of presentations lent an educational component to the program.

Myles, for example, discovered that he needs to contact the American consulate prior to the trips to avert such delays. "They also gave us a nice, broad perspective on the Canadian economy and, more specifically, of growth in certain areas," Myles said.

Approximately \$1 billion in trade takes place between Canada and the United States each day, most of which is export from the United States. With a large percentage of the trade coming from Michigan, Oakland County is considered one of the country's strongest trading areas.

Among the other topics addressed by the forum's speakers were the legalities of international joint ventures, government resources for American companies and Canadian tax laws.

Following the presentations, each participating company advanced through a series of 14 meetings with potential business partners from Canada.

Meanwhile, Patterson had an opportunity to join Blanchard in speaking with several Canadian government officials about the potential benefits of conducting

business with the County. Blanchard's contacts in the Ministry of Trade and the Deputy Prime Minister, are the result of his three years of service as an ambassador to Canada.

"Oakland County is getting a fair amount of international recognition," Patterson said. But by heightening exposure this year, Patterson and others hope to benefit from Canada's presently booming economy.

"This is a good time to throw a few more in the fire," said Patterson. "We want to capitalize on their rebound."

Several days after the meetings, Myles believes four of the contacts he made during the mission have potential, two as customers and two as representatives in Canada.

"It was a matchmaking process...that gives us an opportunity for another base of products. Here we are tied to the auto industry," he said. Cultivating business in Canada, which has a sizable manufacturing base in snow equipment, trains and aircraft, sets up a safety net for the company, he said.

However, Myles and other local business leaders most likely would not have made the costly and time-consuming trek to Canada alone.

"The reason we went was to identify new markets," said Gary

Brincat, vice president of sales at CSI, a Troy-based company that models factory manufacturing systems on computers. "But when you look at a company finding new opportunities in another country - it is quite costly."

Travel and time costs aside, it's even less likely Brincat - on his own - could have identified and arranged to meet with 14 medium-sized, manufacturing companies that need his firm's services but are unable to afford the expensive technology required to perform it.

Brincat walked away from the meetings hopeful that nine of the companies would outsource work to CSI, a 12-year-old company with 75 percent of their business coming from outside contracts.

Another company, Ferndale-based Flynn Machine Products "got kissed on the first date" and came home with three, solid business contracts, Patterson said.

"I think it's very powerful to have some extensions beyond your own economy," Brincat said. "Although the economy is very strong here, you kind of have to plan for the future when times are good. This is some really good insight - to try to make progress when things are good and not bad."



**Powerful connections:** Gary Brincat, vice president of sales at CSI in Troy, made several potentially valuable business contacts at last week's trade mission between Canada and Oakland County. Former Gov. James Blanchard and Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson were responsible for arranging the meetings.

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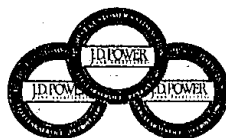
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## Solid waste committee appointed

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners appointed 14 members to the Solid Waste Planning Committee at the board meeting on Oct. 9.

The board unanimously supported the recommendations of the general government committee, chaired by Commissioner Kay Schmid (R-Now, Northville). The appointments are for two-year terms that extend through Oct. 11, 1999. The committee members will be making recommendations relative to updating Oakland County's Solid Waste Management Plan, which will be released for public comment in mid-1998.

Commissioner Dennis Powers (R-Milford) was reappointed as the elected county government representative to serve on the committee. Commissioner Eugene Kaczmar (D-Madison Heights) was also reappointed as the alternate elected county government representative.

The 14 members to the Solid Waste Planning Committee were appointed as follows:

■ Solid Waste Management Industry: Robert Leininger, Yalo Levin Thomas Waffon, Mike Caspe.

■ Elected County Government Official: Dennis Powers.

■ Elected Township Official: Jill Bastian.

■ Industrial Waste Generator: Samuel Senbright.

■ Environmental Interest Groups: Timothy Carpenter, Dawn Furlong.