



From left to right: Denis Krauss, operations manager, Brad Sinden, laser tech supervisor, Eric St. James, president of Paramount Machinery, Gunar Zenaitis, president.

# Men of Steel

*Ontario Steel Service Center Expands Value-added Cutting Capacity in a Big Way*

**W**hen Debro Steel, of Brampton, Ont., first opened its doors in 1960, no one could have imagined how much future technology would affect the steel service market.

Since that time the evolution of cutting technology on Debro's shop floor has propelled the company from oxy-fuel flame cutting to underwater plasma cutting to laser cutting. The recent addition of an NTC TLX-1480 three-axis laser system equipped with a PRC 7.0-kW resonator now allows the company to laser-cut parts that are longer and thicker than any previously possible or available within Debro's trading market.

The combination of a cutting table measuring 14 by 80 ft. and a laser capable of cutting up to 1¼-in.-thick steel provides the company with multiple op-

tions to meet customer requirements, including multijob staging.

This technological leap represents a cultural change at Debro as employees, some of which are second generation, learn new skills to keep pace with the changing needs of the company's customers.

"We felt that we had to leapfrog the technology," explained company President Gunar Zenaitis. "We decided to bypass high-definition plasma, which a lot of steel service centers have been installing in recent years, and went right to laser cutting. We want to target both long and thick parts and compete directly against those who are currently cutting with high-definition plasma machines."

Last month the laser system entered its first full production month follow-



Producing laser-cut parts from plate allows Debro Steel to be competitive in a wide range of industries.

ing configuration, training, sample prototyping, and testing. Initial customer reaction has resulted in Debro increasing its staffing in order to provide production capacity of three shifts per day. While the learning curve was steep, just by walking through Debro Steel you notice the excitement that has arrived with this installation.

"This machine is going to produce a product that is significantly better than

anything on the market ... especially when compared to plasma or oxyfuel cutting,” said General Sales Manager David Vachon.

The parts the laser is now producing require less work after being cut. This means that the company can produce a finished part rather than a semi-finished part.

“Creating added value through the elimination of redundant machining, welding, handling, and transportation results in a lower total supply chain cost for our customers. Improving our customers’ competitive position is the secret to our long-term success, which means better margins and better profitability for all of our supply partners,” said Zenaitis.

Debro serves many industries, including construction, material handling, transportation, communications, and metal fabrication. It also provides next-day delivery of a wide variety of warehouse stock items.

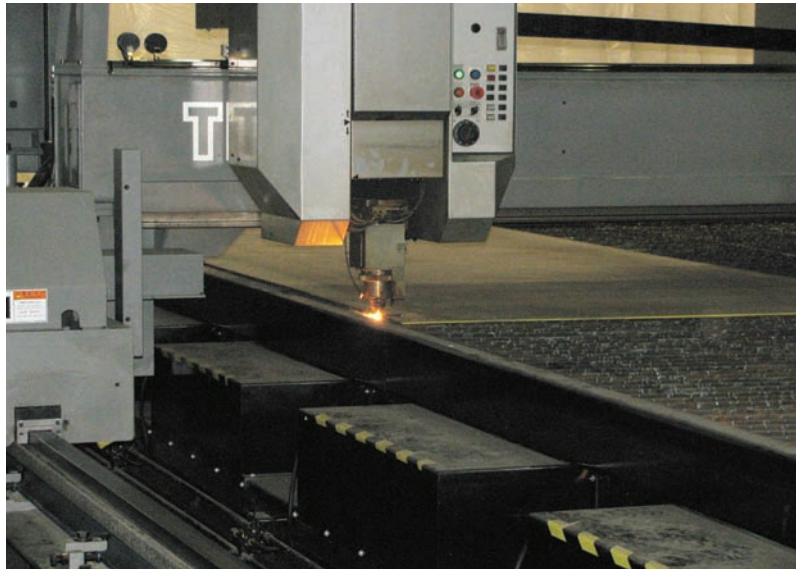
“The aggregate industry is very strong for us right now as is the farm implement industry,” said Vachon.

Since Debro is not tied directly to the automotive industry—at least as far as supplying the tiered system is concerned—the company has not felt the direct repercussions of that specific downturned segment of the industry. Debro does, however, operate within the southern Ontario manufacturing base, and it has seen many of its customers impacted by the continuing downward trend in manufacturing activity and the resulting loss of jobs over the past decade due to a loss of competitive advantage. Debro’s recent investment is geared to improving its customers’ ability to stem this tide.

### Revitalizing Debro

In 2006 when Zenaitis joined the company, the concept of buying a laser was well under way. However, the laser that was under consideration was available with only a 6-kW laser source and had a much narrower and shorter cutting table than the company required. He wanted to ensure that the latest technology was installed.

That meant a re-evaluation of the pur-



Debro’s NTC TLX-1480 three-axis laser system is equipped with a PRC 7.0-kW resonator that allows the company to laser-cut parts that are longer and thicker than any previously possible.

chase, a building modification to accommodate a large table, and the eventual selection of the NTC laser from Paramount Machinery, of Mississauga, Ont.

“When I came onboard in 2006, the mandate was to revitalize the business,” said Zenaitis. “The last piece of equipment that was purchased was a four-head plasma machine some 12 years ago. Now, with the addition of the laser cutting system, we have the technological resources in place to grow the business.”

This machine is well-suited for long production runs due to its long bed length and laser cutting power. For Debro this means better part quality and the ability to create many different parts without stopping the laser because of the machine’s capacity and cutting table.

However, it is also important to the company to keep capacity open for prototyping and future product development.

“Our customers are really challenging us to create the complex parts that they need and do so in a cost-effective manner,” said Zenaitis. “Since the installation we are seeing new orders and finding new customers that are interested in the long, laser-cut parts that we can produce.”

After the investment was made and

the installation complete came the hard part: cutting steel. Prior to any parts being produced, training and setup had to be finalized.

“Paramount Machinery took care of all of the deliverables ... we negotiated a complete turnkey-style installation,” explained Zenaitis. “Setting up the cutting library and conditions was done prior to any actual work being performed. NTC, Paramount, and our staff worked very hard and very well together in order to get this done so that we could begin to accept our first commercial orders.”

The company will now focus its energies on adding even more value to the parts they create. Following the upcoming installation of a conveyor system to aid in the unloading of parts, Debro will look to add a bending operation to the shop floor.

“The customers that we are working with and looking for have more than just laser needs, and we want to be able to offer them formed, processed parts as well,” added Zenaitis. “We also realize that ISO certification is important to many of our customers, and Debro is well on its way to becoming certified to the latest ISO Q9001-2008 standard.” ■

*For more information, visit [www.debrosteel.com](http://www.debrosteel.com).*