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Ten Canadian model railroad manufacturers band together as U.S. tariffs bite

New national coalition urges Canadian hobbyists to spend their hobby dollars in Canada as a 50% U.S. tariff reshapes the industry

TORONTO - Manufacturers from coast to coast are behind a new coalition launched today to help Canada's model railroad industry withstand a 50% U.S. tariff that has upended a market many of them spent decades building. Canadian Model Railroad Manufacturers (CMRM) brings together 10 companies that design, develop and manufacture products for model railroaders across the country, with a shared message for hobbyists: spend your hobby dollars in Canada.

The tariff has hit small manufacturers hard and fast. Many CMRM members are small businesses, building specialized products in workshops and studios across Canada. For companies that have spent years developing customers in the enormous U.S. model railroad market, a 50% tariff represents a significant new barrier to those sales.

Toronto-based miniprints is one example: approximately 85% of the company's sales over the past year went to U.S. customers, and the new tariff has dramatically changed the economics of serving that market. Rather than wait for the trade dispute to resolve, miniprints owner Bernard Hellen began reaching out to other Canadian manufacturers about working together - a conversation that grew into CMRM.

"For years, Canadian model railroad manufacturers have built successful businesses by selling to customers on both sides of the border. The tariffs changed that almost overnight. We can't control what happens in Washington, but we can control what we do here at home. CMRM is about Canadian companies working together to build a stronger domestic market and showing Canadian hobbyists just how much of this hobby is being created right here in Canada."

- Bernard Hellen, owner, miniprints

The pressure isn't confined to one company or one region. Precision Design Co., based in rural Manitoba near the U.S. border, built its business on easy access to American customers - an advantage that has steadily eroded.

"As a small manufacturer located on the U.S. border in rural Manitoba, we were ideally situated to serve the American market with our model train products. The United States is one of the largest model railroad markets in the world, yet access to that market has become steadily more difficult in recent years. Many small Canadian manufacturers have earned a strong reputation in the U.S. as among the very best in the industry. Now more than ever, it is essential that Canadian manufacturers come together to raise awareness of the exceptional companies operating right here at home."

- Bill Brillinger, Precision Design Co.

The 10 founding members span Canada from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, as well as a broad cross-section of the hobby: miniprints, ITLA Scale Models, Precision Design Co., Fast Tracks Hobbyworks, PDC Custom Decals, Inter-Action Hobbies, Ultimatum Modeling Tools, Otter Valley Railroad, Sylvan Scale Models and Roomettes. Together they make miniature figures and details, structures and craftsman kits, track-building products, decals, rolling stock, lighting, tools and other specialized products.

"Joining CMRM reflects our commitment to craftsmanship, innovation, and a thriving scale model building community. By uniting top Canadian producers, we can pool our expertise and bring world-class precision products to hobbyists worldwide."

- Nick Masney, President, ITLA Scale Models Inc.

CMRM will promote its members through CMRM.ca, social media, industry events and cooperative marketing, and participating companies will display a CMRM Member mark so hobbyists can identify them at shows, in stores and online.

The coalition says it isn't about turning away from the U.S. - American customers remain important to many members - but about building a more resilient Canadian industry by growing awareness and demand closer to home.

Canadian hobbyists can learn more about participating companies at CMRM.ca.

Spend your hobby dollars in Canada.

About Canadian Model Railroad Manufacturers

Canadian Model Railroad Manufacturers (CMRM) is a voluntary, invitation-only marketing coalition bringing together some of the best of Canada's model railroad industry. Members are Canadian companies that design, develop, manufacture and create products for model railroaders. CMRM helps make these businesses more visible, encourages cooperation among participating companies, and helps Canadian hobbyists discover the remarkable range of model railroad products available from Canadian businesses.

Media Contact

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Bernard Hellen is available for interviews and can help connect media with individual member companies - including in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia - for local and regional angles.

Product photography and the CMRM Member mark are available on request.