

# Best Defence Conference 2017

## SOUTHERN ONTARIO'S DEFENCE CLUSTER CONTINUES TO THRIVE

REPORTING: DANIEL KITCHEN

I remember last year anxiously watching the United States presidential election unfold as I sat in my London, Ontario hotel room, on the eve of the Best Defence Conference. I also recall the atmosphere at the show the following day, resulting from President Trump's win. Everyone knew change was forthcoming, especially within the defence sector.

With what can only be described as a whirlwind year, one thing we can definitely agree on is that the environment within Canada's defence industry has changed. Some of these changes stem from south of the border while others have come from within Canada, such as the new Defence Policy released in June 2017.

While lots may have changed within a year, southern Ontario's defence cluster is still thriving as was displayed at the 2017 Best Defence Conference. With London being a hub for a growing defence cluster, the goal of the conference is to promote economic development for the industry and ultimately act as a bridge between business and government for the region. This year's show focused on topics ranging from future warfare capability requirements, domestic and international programs at DND, Cyber Security and a technology showcase.

This year's event kicked off on November 1st with presentations on the Build in Canada Innovation Program and Canada's Innovation

and Skills Plan. Later that evening was the kickoff reception at which Dr. David Perry, Senior Analyst Canadian Global Affairs Institute was a keynote speaker. Christyn Cianfarani, President of the Canadian Association of Defence & Security Industries (CADSI) kicked off Day 2 with her address.

Some of the other notable speakers included: Colonel Nicolas J.L. Pilon, CD, P. Eng. Director, Land Requirements Canadian Forces, Capt (N) Jason Armstrong, Director Naval Requirements, Colonel Steve Chouinard, Director Air Requirements, John M. Hoffman, Head of Engineering, Government Systems ViaSat, Inc., Eva Martinez, Vice President, In Service Support PAL Aerospace and General the Hon. Andrew Leslie Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs who was the keynote speaker on the second day of the conference.

CDR has now attended and supported every Best Defence Conference since the show's inception. In its second year under Pilot Hill Ltd. we have witnessed the continued growth of the event and are confident Heather Pilot and her team will provide a valuable forum for informed discussions on defence issues for the region in years to come.

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*Daniel Kitchen is CDR's Managing Editor*

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Heather Pilot, President of Pilot Hill Ltd, visits the GDL LAV 6.0 outside of the London Convention Center.