



# Beyond Yellowknife

Northern Foodservices expects to grow alongside its clients in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and provinces of Western Canada.



Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

"Part of our niche is maintaining a stock of fresh product here at all times."

// ROGER WALKER, general manager

Northern Foodservices is preparing to move into a larger facility for the southern portion of its operations.



[ BY BRIAN SALGADO ]

**There are many food distributors** serving the numerous mines and exploration camps throughout the Northwest Territories. Northern Foodservices maintains its head office and some of its operations in this remote region of Canada, which makes it capable of filling orders on a next-day basis.

"We are the largest supplier based in the Northwest Territories, and what dis-

tinguishes us here from our southern supplier competitors is the ability to have product the next day, when required, for our customers," General Manager Roger Walker says. "That is because of our geography. The 20-hour transport trip from Edmonton to Yellowknife does not allow enough time for southern companies to process orders for next day delivery. It's a niche that we have and we need to continue to work that."

Northern Foodservices was created in 1999 and began serving local restaurants with fresh produce, dairy, meat and other food items. It soon entered the mining camp market, and with major new customers such as BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto, and DeBeers, Northern Foodservices quickly needed to expand.

We supplied all of the food during construction of Rio Tinto's Diavik Diamond Mine and continue to supply them with their fresh produce, dairy products and some dry goods.

In 2001, Northern Foodservices moved into its 30,000-square-foot warehouse in Yellowknife. The company also maintains a 16,000-square-foot facility in Edmonton, but is in the process of finalizing a lease on a 54,000-square-foot facility, into which they will be moving the southern portion of operations.

The company operates as a full-service food provider, with produce, dairy, frozen goods, fresh and frozen meats, seafood, groceries and dry goods, available for its clients in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Northern British Columbia. Clients include mines and exploration camps, oil and gas open and rig camps, correctional institutions, military bases and exercises, restaurants and dining facilities.

"Our business out of our Edmonton

## PROFILE

**Northern Foodservices** [www.nwtfood.com](http://www.nwtfood.com) | 2011 revenues: \$10 million

Headquarters: Yellowknife, Northwest Territories | Employees: 18 | Specialty: Food distribution



The company expects the oil and gas sector to be a significant driver of growth in the near future.

facility is rapidly expanding,” Walker says. “We see our clients in the oil and gas sector in Alberta, Saskatchewan and northern British Columbia as the next growth generator for Northern Foodservices. Although it is a very competitive market, we have the capacity, expertise and commitment to customer service that enables us to compete with large southern distributors.”

Through its localized focus on distribution and regional warehousing, Northern Foodservices can serve clients who are accustomed to a minimum three-day lead time for their products with next-day deliveries if required.

“Our Yellowknife facility is 1,000 road-miles north of Edmonton, so the large suppliers out of there can’t get their product here on a next-day schedule,” Walker says.

“Part of our niche is maintaining a

stock of fresh product here at all times,” he adds. “We often get calls from clients asking if we can supplement a southern order from here, due to a shortage from a supplier, or some other inconsistency in their supply chain.”

#### CLIMATE CONDITIONS

Northern Foodservices knows how to protect its items from the harsh winter elements of northern Canada.

Northern Foodservices utilizes insulated pallet covers to prevent freezing of perishable product. Walker says that all companies provide winter wrap when requested, but if pallets of perishable product sit on the tarmac, or in the back of an unheated truck for any length of time, winter wrap alone won’t be enough protection from the cold.

“With normal winter wrap, your produce is still going to freeze if pallets are

#### Honorable Delivery

In December 2011, Northern Foodservices was presented with the Commander’s Pendant by the Canadian Military for exceptional support.

General Manager Roger Walker says the company provided food for Operation Nanook 11, a 500-person military exercise near Resolute Bay, a small Inuit hamlet on Cornwallis Island in Nunavut, Northwest Territories.

According to Northern News Services, Operation Nanook is the main of three major annual Canadian Forces Sovereignty operations held in the north.

Northern Foodservices also reports that, as of press time, it is providing the military its food requirements for Operation Arctic Ram, a 1,500-person exercise being conducted in the Yellowknife area.

exposed to some of the extreme temperatures and wind chills that we experience here in the north,” Walker says.

#### BOOMING BUSINESS

Now that the worldwide economy is beginning to thaw out, mining and exploration companies are picking up operations in northern Canada once again. Walker says this means increased sales are en route for his company, which, combined with increasing sales from its southern division, has necessitated the search for a larger distribution facility in Edmonton.

“The northern economy is not yet back to where it was before the downturn, but business is increasing,” Walker says. “Our clients depend on us to ensure that their product is readily available and is of top quality when they take possession of it.” **EMI**





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