

Port Welcomes New Partner

Canadian food distributor debuts in Tacoma

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The Port of Tacoma Commission recently approved a 10-year lease agreement with Canadian-based North West Company, Inc. In December, the food distribution company will begin occupying a warehouse located at 2000 Taylor Way in Tacoma.

The site was formerly used as a distribution center for Safeway. The port has been renting freezer space in the warehouse to a small distribution company, but has been unable to rent the entire space until now. The rental agreement could generate about \$474,000 annually and bring as many as 35 jobs to the area.

Both port and company representatives seemed excited about the newly formed partnership.

“We’re extremely excited to be a tenant in this property,” Bob Cain, vice president of logistics and supply chain services for The North West Company said. “We’d be there tomorrow if that was possible.”

Additionally, Cain told port commissioners that the company has every intention of building a long-term partnership because the company is also a long-term relationship with Alaska. Because of Tacoma’s proximity to Canada and Alaska, this new warehouse provides an ideal location for a new company shipping location, he added.

The North West Company has business roots dating back to the Hudson Bay Company, Cain explained to the port commissioners. Today, the company is one of the leading providers of food and other products and serves to Alaska and Canada, where it is headquartered. The company also has outlets in the South Pacific and the Caribbean.

According to The North West Company’s website, the distributor’s northern retail stores operate in communities with populations from 500 to 7,000. A typical store is 7,500-square-feet in size and offers food, family apparel, housewares, appliances, outdoor products, and services such as quick-service prepared food, special ordering, money transfers and check cashing.

The company has recently expanded to new markets, including the expansion of wholesaling to independent stores, opening junior discount stores in rural communities and urban neighborhoods in western Canada and a recent acquisition of Cost-U-Less, Inc., a chain of midsize warehouse format stores serving the South Pacific and the Caribbean.

Port commissioners seemed to embrace their new northern partner.

“It is wonderful to have a new business with such a strong history in Tacoma,” Commission President Clare Petrich said.

Other commissioners expressed their excitement about the new partnership and the jobs it could provide. Port staff also expressed excitement about their newest tenant.

“Today’s action is an example of why Alaskan trade is an important industry for the port and the region,” said Tim Ferrell, executive director for the port.