



The North West Company is a leading retailer of food and everyday products and services to rural communities and urban neighbourhoods in Canada, Alaska, the South Pacific and the Caribbean.

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NORTH WEST COMPANY FUND ANNOUNCES FOURTH QUARTER EARNINGS, CASH DISTRIBUTION, AND CFO RETIREMENT AND SUCCESSION APPOINTMENT

WINNIPEG, March 18, 2010 (TSX:NWF.UN): North West Company Fund (the “Fund” or “North West”) today announced its unaudited financial results for the fourth quarter and fiscal year ended January 31, 2010. **The Fund’s fourth quarter results, report to unitholders and management’s discussion and analysis can be found in the investor section of the Fund’s website at www.northwest.ca.**

The Fund also announced today a quarterly cash distribution of \$0.34 cents per unit to unitholders of record on March 31, 2010, to be paid by April 15, 2010.

Financial Highlights

Fourth quarter consolidated net earnings were \$20.2 million, an increase of 3.0% over last year and diluted earnings per unit for the quarter improved to \$0.42 compared to \$0.40 last year. Sales decreased 1.4% to \$370.5 million compared to the fourth quarter last year, but were up 3.9% excluding the foreign exchange impact. On a same store basis, sales increased 1.6%¹ led by strong food sales growth in the Canadian Operations.

Trading profit² or earnings before interest, income taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) increased 0.5% to \$32.3 million compared to \$32.2 million in the fourth quarter last year. Trading profit gains in Canada driven largely by sales growth offset a decrease in International Operations trading profit.

For the year ended January 31, 2010, sales increased 3.7% to \$1.444 billion compared to \$1.393 billion in 2008 and were up 2.4% excluding the foreign exchange impact. On a same store basis, sales increased 0.1%¹ as food sales growth offset weaker general merchandise sales across all banners. Trading profit increased 6.6% to \$130.3 million compared to \$122.3 million last year and net earnings increased \$6.4 million or 8.5% to \$81.8 million. Diluted earnings per unit increased 8.3% to \$1.69 compared to \$1.56 last year.

“This was a challenging year for our customers,” said Edward Kennedy, President & CEO. “Income levels were affected by the economic slowdown and we saw the impact in our discretionary spending

¹ Excluding the foreign exchange impact

² See Non-GAAP Measures Section of Management’s Discussion & Analysis



categories and in our tourism-dependent island markets. Considering these factors I am pleased with the resilience of our food business and the modest resurgence in our Canadian banners that was achieved in the fourth quarter.”

The Fund’s audited consolidated financial statements and MD&A for the year ended January 31, 2010 will be released on or before April 8, 2010. Both documents will be available in the investor section of the Fund’s website at www.northwest.ca or at www.sedar.com.

Organizational Changes

North West also announced the retirement of Leo Charriere, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, effective June 28, 2010. “Leo has been a core member of our executive team, providing leadership to both financial and non-financial support activities over the past seven years.” said Edward Kennedy. “We thank Leo for taking on this broad role and for his significant contributions to North West.”

Together with Mr. Charriere’s retirement, North West announced the appointment of John King as Chief Financial Officer, effective June 28th, 2010 and Craig Gilpin as Executive Vice President and Chief Corporate Officer, effective March 18th, 2010.

Mr. King, currently Vice-President, Finance, joined North West 16 years ago and has held progressively senior roles in accounting and finance. He holds both C.A. and C.M.A. accounting designations.

“John has leadership experience and a record of accomplishment across all facets of our finance activities,” said Edward Kennedy. “His in-depth knowledge of our business will be a great asset in his new role and I look forward to our new working relationship.”

Craig Gilpin was previously the President Operations, Sobeys Ontario, a role that he held for five years. Before joining Sobeys, Craig had a successful 17 year career with A&P Canada, including roles as Senior Vice-President, Finance and as Vice-President, Planning.

“I am very pleased to announce Craig Gilpin’s appointment to the newly created role of Chief Corporate Officer,” said Edward Kennedy. “Craig brings to North West a deep skill set that, combined with John’s appointment, fills the gap left by Leo’s retirement and adds important executive depth. Craig’s accountabilities will include Logistics and Supply Chain Services, Information Services, Human Resources and Marketing.”

Conference Call

The Fund is hosting a fourth quarter results conference call on March 18, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. CT (3:00 p.m. ET). To access the call, please dial, please dial 1-888-789-9572 or 1-416-695-7806 a few minutes in advance. The conference call will be archived and can be accessed until March 25, 2010 by dialing 1-800-408-3053 or 416-695-5800, Pass Code 7711455. The conference call will also be archived at www.northwest.ca.

Notice to Readers

Certain forward-looking statements are made in this news release, within the meaning of applicable securities laws. These statements reflect the North West’s current expectations and



are based on information currently available to management. The words “may”, “will”, “should”, “believe”, “expect”, “plan”, “anticipate”, “intend”, “estimate”, “predict”, “potential”, “continue”, or the negative of these terms, identify forward-looking matters. These statements speak only as of the date of this press release. The actual results could differ materially from those anticipated in these forward-looking statements.

Reliance should not be placed on forward-looking statements because they involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors, which may cause the actual results, performance or achievements of North West to differ materially from anticipated future results, performance or achievement expressed or implied by such forward-looking statements. Factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements include, but are not limited to, fluctuations in interest rates and currency values, legislative and regulatory developments, legal developments, the occurrence of weather-related and other natural catastrophes, changes in tax laws, and those risks and uncertainties detailed in the section entitled “Risk Factors” in the Fund’s Management’s Discussion and Analysis and Annual Information Form. The preceding list is not an exhaustive list of possible factors. These and other factors should be considered carefully and readers are cautioned not to place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. The Fund undertakes no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise, other than as required by applicable law.

Corporate Profile

The North West Company is a leading retailer of food and everyday products and services to rural communities and urban neighbourhoods in Canada, Alaska, the South Pacific and the Caribbean. North West operates 227 stores under the trading names Northern, NorthMart, Giant Tiger, AC Value Center and Cost-U-Less, and has annualized revenue of approximately CDN \$1.5 billion.

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For more information contact:

Edward Kennedy, President and CEO, The North West Company LP
phone 204-934-1482; fax 204-934-1317; email ekennedy@northwest.ca

Léo Charrière, Executive Vice-President and CFO, The North West Company LP
phone 204-934-1503; fax 204-934-1317; email lcharriere@northwest.ca

John King, Vice-President, Finance, The North West Company LP
Phone 204-934-1397; fax 204-934-1317; email jking@northwest.ca

or visit on-line at www.northwest.ca

