

Member Profile

Transwest Mining Systems

A mining focused equipment supply and service company



Two newly commissioned Komatsu excavators - a PC300E and a PC1800 prepare for work at the Endako molybdenum mine near Fraser Lake, B.C.



*Bruce Knight,
President of
Transwest*

Since its inception in 1986, Transwest Mining Systems has focused on serving the mines in Western Canada, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. With branches in Elkford and Port Coquitlam, BC, Edmonton and Fort McMurray, AB, Thunder Bay, ON, and onsite service at the Diavik and Ekati diamond mines, Transwest supplies Komatsu mining equipment, Driltech Mission rotary blast hole drills, and parts and service to the mining industry.

From small beginnings with a modest head office in Vancouver, a branch in the Elk Valley, a developing branch in Tumbler Ridge and a limited presence in Edmonton, Transwest has evolved into a major player in Western Canada's mining service/supply industry.

Company Pride

As a private company owned by three employees and a committed, experienced workforce, the core value of Transwest was established.



A Transwest manufactured 930E truck body is the first of four to be delivered to Suncor this year.

Pride in the company, getting the job done on time on budget and the recognition that the customer comes first, was an attitude that developed from the top down.

That attitude has prevailed and contributed to the growth of Transwest. The picture today is much different from what it was in 1986. Along with the mining industry, Transwest has grown and branched out.

The company is now owned by Komatsu Canada Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Sumitomo Corporation of Japan. This ownership has enhanced Transwest's ability to stay competitive through expanded synergies.

Transwest now employs nearly 500 people with a large complement of welders, heavy-duty mechanics and industrial electricians and is continuously looking for additional skilled trades people.

The Tumbler Ridge branch, which flourished in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was closed in 2000 due to the closure of the Quintette coal mine.

However, along with many other companies, Transwest anticipated the oil sands growth and the necessity to have a presence in Fort McMurray. In 1991, they established a small support capability. Two years later they moved into a renovated 20,000-square-foot facility located along Highway 63 adjacent to Suncor. This facility housed a parts warehouse, component rebuild area and a welding shop along with offices. With the continued expansion of the oil sands, another expansion for Transwest was undertaken in 2001, when in addition to the existing 20,000-square-foot facility, they moved into a new 62,000-square-foot facility on the same site.

The Fort McMurray branch is now well equipped with a large welding facility that has an 80 ton overhead crane, component rebuild bays and a spare parts warehouse with over \$15 million in inventory. This, in addition to the

existing shop, gives this branch over 80,000 square feet of shop, warehouse and office space. Future plans call for an additional expansion of the facility to be completed by late fall 2005 that will see the addition of another welding bay and a truck service bay.

Working in the North

The discovery of diamonds in the North added more facets to

Transwest's opportunities. Mine operators driven by the need to keep costs down were approaching equipment/service suppliers like Transwest to form strategic alliances to keep their equipment running cost effective. Transwest met this challenge and formed a Contract Maintenance and Supply department to service not only the remote diamond mines, but any mine with a desire to form this

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type of partnership. As a result, Transwest has service and parts personnel working at several remote site locations in the far north. The challenges of working in the North are huge. Logistics and planning play a large part in keeping equipment running at optimum levels. Limitations are put on suppliers because of the short time frame of the winter road access that ranges from 49 to 69 days. For Transwest to supply its usual level of service, a large team effort is required and delivered.

Long a mainstay in British Columbia's Elk Valley, the Transwest Elkford branch has adapted to the cyclical nature of world coal demands and has become a dependable ally of the Elk Valley mines. Located in southeastern British Columbia, the Transwest Elkford Branch is a full line dealer for the Komatsu products. From the largest Komatsu mining trucks to the smallest support equipment, this branch can supply it.

Tucked away in the outskirts of Vancouver is the Port Coquitlam rebuild/rewind shop. This facility was also the head office of Transwest until June of 2003 when the head office was relocated to Edmonton. With the growth of the oil sands and the diamond industry, Edmonton has become a natural service hub.

ISO Certification


The Port Coquitlam shop is ISO 9001-2000 certified and is the G.E. Authorized Repair Centre for Western Canada. This shop specializes in all AC and DC rotating equipment including rewinds and repairs to all makes of motors, generators and alternators.

With Edmonton's new central status, Transwest has plans to move the rebuild/rewind shop currently in Port Coquitlam to a new facility to be built in Edmonton. The new facility will combine the head office, the current Edmonton branch and the rebuild/rewind shop into one facility. As this is a

major investment and transition in Transwest's journey, great care is being taken to get it right and make the move as smooth as possible. Plans call for the new facility to be operational by early fall 2006.

In addition to the branch locations in British Columbia and Alberta, Transwest also has a facility located in Thunder Bay to service North American Palladium.


Under the leadership of Transwest's President, Bruce Knight, Transwest Mining Systems is committed to being the best. "We've concentrated on being a niche market supplier and we've been successful," says Bruce. "We will continue to be responsive and innovative when we see an opportunity to serve our customers and assist them in reducing their costs and becoming more productive." ■



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