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FUEL MANAGEMENT: WAVE OF THE FUTURE

The cost of fuel has risen over 250% since 2002, and for most companies this is the second largest expense next to labour. "These escalating costs have cut dramatically into corporate profits," says Jack Lee, President and CEO of 4Refuel Canada, which has identified "fuel management" as a new growth industry. "As fuel managers we save our clients time and money by providing low-risk environmentally friendly solutions to minimize fuel consumption and maximize the productivity of equipment and personnel."

Langley, British Columbia-headquartered 4Refuel Canada, which operated as Mini-Tankers Canada from 1995 to 2005, was until a few months ago primarily an on-location diesel deliverer. "Fuel Management' is a relatively new concept," Lee continues. "A manager is someone who is responsible for controlling costs and profitability. A fuel manager does that with regards to fuel. With 4Refuel as your fuel manager, we deliver fuel directly to the job site and equipment location 24/7, 365 days a year. We monitor each fill, and with our exclusive Fuel Management Online we deliver data and reports, allowing our clients to make key operating decisions that will save fuel, improve productivity, and ultimately, profitability. 4Refuel manages all of this quickly and conveniently, without wasting our clients' time."

Some of 4Refuel's clients include: Tim Hortons, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, The Brick, CN Rail and Federal Express. 4Refuel, with regional offices in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada, has over 125 employees and franchised operators. "The heart of our company is our network of franchised operators," Lee explains. "Each operator has a vested interest in their clients' success and profitability. In addition, we have built a team of territory managers who work directly with our clients and the franchised operator to deliver customized fuel management solutions guaranteed to meet each client's specific needs."



Through U-CON Systems Corp. (www.u-con.ca), an affiliate company, 4Refuel created Fuel Management Online (FMO), telematics data capture and user friendly reporting from each piece of operating equipment. A radio frequency tag, about the size of a loonie, is attached to each piece of equipment to capture data. The tag is scanned with a handheld computer and data is sent to U-Con Systems' data warehouse. Each client chooses from a list of options then customized reports are delivered. Information such as fuel economy, equipment productivity, idling time and efficiencies is available online or it can be e-mailed directly to the client.

"We have served thousands of clients in all industries since 1995, including construction, earth moving, transport, power generation, marine and rail. This year we'll manage over 200 million litres of fuel for our 6,000+ clients. And demand for our service is increasing," Lee adds. "This is a growing 23 billion litre industry, and no one can do what 4Refuel does for our clients. Fuel management is truly a new growth industry."

4Refuel franchised operators receive a proven turnkey business, which has shown a significant return on investment. The company offers hands-on training, support with a professional sales team, invoicing and collection services, and no royalty payments.

Today 4Refuel is meeting this demand by growing its network of franchised operators, offering a multi-unit opportunity in each franchised territory. In the past, franchises were awarded on a single tanker truck, per territory basis. "New franchisees must possess experience, skills and the desire to operate hands-on, manage and supervise their own business for long term growth," Lee points out. "We are not looking for someone who wants to buy a job, we are looking for people who understand business, people and potential in this new growth industry. This is a terrific opportunity with an excellent return on investment."

The markets identified by 4Refuel in Canada include Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. The vast majority of territories come with an existing client base, so new franchisees are not starting from scratch.

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“We are recruiting right now, and to attract interest we have just announced a \$5,000 incentive reward program to anyone who gives us a lead that turns into a new franchised operator,” Lee concludes. “Who do you know?” ■



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