

Profile: **The Northern Centre for Advanced Technology**

By Heather Seftel-Kirk

Bold, New and Exciting:

NORCAT Launches the Innovation Mill and the Global Centre of Excellence in Training and Development / Health and Safety

NORCAT, a Canadian-based global non-profit organization, has recently made several exciting announcements that serve to enhance its position as one of the world's leading centres for skilled labour training and as an integral Canadian innovation centre in the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs.

Founded in 1995 and headquartered in a 70,000 sq. ft. facility in Sudbury, Ontario, NORCAT is focused on developing and implementing new opportunities to support technology entrepreneurs and skilled labour training and development clients. It also operates a vibrant innovation hub celebrating and promoting a culture of productivity, innovation and life-long learning.

Don Duval, NORCAT's CEO says, "Our new initiatives will create exciting opportunities that serve each of our priority areas, pushing NORCAT to a new level of excellence and capability. We have listened to and engaged our customers in this process and are very happy with our future outlook."

The new Global Centre of Excellence in Training and Development / Health and Safety is focused on

developing and providing world-class programs, services and resources to reduce injuries, save lives and enhance productivity in the workplace.

Duval referenced a recent report published by the International Labour Organization saying, "Given that nearly 2.5 million people die every year from occupational accidents and diseases, an additional 270 million suffer serious non-fatal injuries, and another 160 million fall ill from work-related causes, we felt it was critical to expand our programs and services to address these complex global challenges."

NORCAT stands out, not only for its training experience, quality and credentials, but also for its infrastructure. As part of its new Centre of Excellence, NORCAT will soon acquire a mobile, state-of-the-art 360 degree mining equipment training simulator with strong support from labour, industry, academe, and the Ontario government.

With this added infrastructure, NORCAT will significantly enhance its training and development service offerings, complementing its existing services to meet the diverse needs of the mining industry.



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Kelly Strong, vice president of Vale's Ontario operations and chair of the Ontario Mining Association says, "From an industry perspective, Vale is excited to partner with NORCAT, Sudbury Integrated Nickel Operations – a Glencore Company, and KGHM on this state-of-the-art project. We applaud NORCAT's commitment, and the commitment of the Ontario government, to invest in this proven training technology. This brings NORCAT to a whole new level of excellence to serve the Canadian mining industry by ensuring workers are effectively trained to work as safely as possible."

NORCAT has also finalized plans for a significant expansion at its operating mine, which also serves as the NORCAT Underground Training Centre. With new facilities and equipment, NORCAT will continue

to provide underground mine training programs to allow workers to acquire the expertise and government mandated training they require to work safely underground.

"In addition we are working with clients to develop curriculum for specialty modules aimed at new workers and existing workers to refine and enhance their skills," Duval says. "When you combine mining equipment simulation, in-person hands-on training, and computer-based eLearning programs, you have a unique service offering that frequently exceeds the needs of our customers."

As part of the mandate to be a recognized centre of excellence, NORCAT has partnered with Laurentian University through the university's Centre for Research in Occupational Safety and Health (CROSH).



"We are embarking on an aggressive, yet exciting initiative to really understand the learning outcomes of the work we do in training and development across broad demographics," Duval says.

Dr. Tammy Eger, director of the Centre for Research in Occupational Safety and Health explains the importance of the initiative. "We need to understand what works, what doesn't and determine ways to better engage people so training is relevant and has value. We understand in a basic sense that people learn differently but it will take a sophisticated initiative to understand engagement and segmentation better."

NORCAT has been developing and providing programs for the mining sector for nearly two decades. Mining is now known as one of the safest resource industries in the country. NORCAT is leveraging its experience and applying its knowledge to other skilled labour industry sectors including oil and gas, telecommunications, manufacturing, healthcare and forestry.

Robert Eberschlag, partner at Norton Rose Fulbright Canada says, "Supporting growth and innovation, serving clients and having a global vision is what drives us as at Norton Rose Fulbright as well. We work with mining companies in Canada and around the world and the Global Centre has a world-class vision that will get world-class results. Resource companies want to grow and become

more productive—and see all their workers get home safely at the end of day. NORCAT's new initiatives will help this continue to happen in Canada and around the world."

NORCAT also recently announced the opening of its new Timmins office under the direction of Ken Stewart, former health and safety training executive at Barrick Gold Hemlo.

"The Timmins mining and skilled labour community was seeking a training and development partner in their own backyard to ensure it could meet their service level requirements. We listened to this feedback and are excited to be launching our first

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office location outside of Sudbury in Timmins,” says Stewart. “Having this location will provide a great opportunity to engage our customers and deliver programs and services where mining companies do business.”

Beyond the training and development side of NORCAT’s business, Duval is excited to launch the NORCAT Innovation Mill, the re-invigorated regional innovation centre focused on partnering with community stakeholders to help start and accelerate the growth of innovative companies.

“Our role as Sudbury’s regional innovation centre is to accelerate the creation of sustainable jobs and wealth,” says Duval. “The launch of the Innovation Mill indicates the creation of a dedicated team focused on engaging the business and capital communities and connecting them with our portfolio of early stage ventures to help expedite their growth.”

Another Innovation Mill advantage is the new Underground Technology Testing Centre and the advanced manufacturing maker-space.

“NORCAT is the only regional innovation centre in North America with a fully referenceable operating mine, providing both start-up ventures and multinational companies with the resources, infrastructure, expertise, and equipment required to design, prototype and test their equipment in an underground mine environment,” says Duval.

NORCAT recently partnered with an array of companies to incorporate leading-edge mining-related technologies into the Underground Technology Testing Centre to create a “mine of the future” showcase site.

“We have been very excited by the array of new global customers using our facilities to develop, test and showcase their technologies. This will continue to be an integral part of the Innovation Mill’s business,” Duval adds.





Tom Sanders, 3M Canada's mining leader, expands on the collaboration. "Developing innovative technology platforms to solve customer problems are at the core of what we do here at 3M. The history of our company is rooted in the mining industry, and continues to be a strategic focus today. We're proud to be working with NORCAT's Innovation Mill and the Underground Technology Testing Centre to

design and develop new technologies, connect with industry innovators, and advance the mining industry here in Canada."

The advanced manufacturing maker-space currently provides startups and larger companies with access to advanced manufacturing resources, expertise and state-of-the-art equipment, including 3D



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printers and computer numerical control machines.

"In our portfolio of startup ventures, we have seen a strong need to provide facilities and equipment to enable our clients to design, prototype and test new products. We are continuing to invest in this service offering and will be making some exciting announcements soon."

Part of the Innovation Mill is the newly launched NORCAT Commons – a co-location incubator for early stage ventures to reside and have proximal access to the Mill's array of entrepreneurship and innovation programs and services. The Mill also offers "graduate" office and shop / lab space for larger companies seeking dedicated offices and facilities within the centre.

"We are excited to provide a space that brings together entrepreneurs with other like-minded entrepreneurs to share ideas, enhance their networks, and discuss opportunities to help them expedite the growth of their businesses," Duval says.

Outside of the physical infrastructure, the Innovation Mill boasts an exceptional group of business mentors – accomplished business leaders and entrepreneurs – who provide invaluable insight and guidance to support NORCAT's early stage clients.

"We currently have approximately twenty globally eminent mentors engaged with the Innovation Mill. As our client portfolio expands and further diversifies we will add mentors and build capacity," Duval says.

One of the mantras the NORCAT Innovation Mill frequently highlights is the importance of collaboration. Beyond just words, the company practices what it preaches. Evidence of this is the announcement of its recent partnerships with 3M Canada, Freelandt Caldwell Reilly, DiBrina Sure Group, and Norton Rose Fulbright.

"Identifying and engaging the right partners is critical for the long-term success of any business. We are exceptionally happy with our recent partnerships and the mutual benefits and value we all expect to derive," says Duval. RQ

For more information about NORCAT, visit:

www.norcat.org