

## Business & Labour

# Blachford Lake Lodge takes Operator of the Year award

*Lodge to celebrate 25 years in business*

by **Stephan Burnett**  
Northern News Services

Blachford Lake Lodge and Conference Resort owner Mike Freeland was surprised when he was presented with the Operator of the Year award at the Northwest Territories Tourism awards ceremony on Saturday.

"I had really no idea and I wasn't sure how many people were up for the award. I was very pleased for our staff the people on the front line. They're the ones who make the guests happy," said Freeland.

Blachford is a fly-in operation, located 60 miles southeast of Yellowknife, with winter and summer programs.

"Next year is our 25th year of operation," said Freeland.

Blachford caters to a number of different markets including conferences for corporate or government groups.

"They use it as a retreat. A getaway for two or three days," said Freeland.

The lodge also hosts Japanese tourists for Aurora watching in the fall and winter, which are highlighted with dog team trips.

"Winter is becoming increasingly popular with snowmobilers to overnight. It's a base, a warm cozy place at the end of a snowmobile ride to come and use the hot tub or sauna. We also have a bar and a couple of fireplaces in the lodge, a wood burning stove with one main lodge with guest rooms and five separate log cabins," said Freeland.

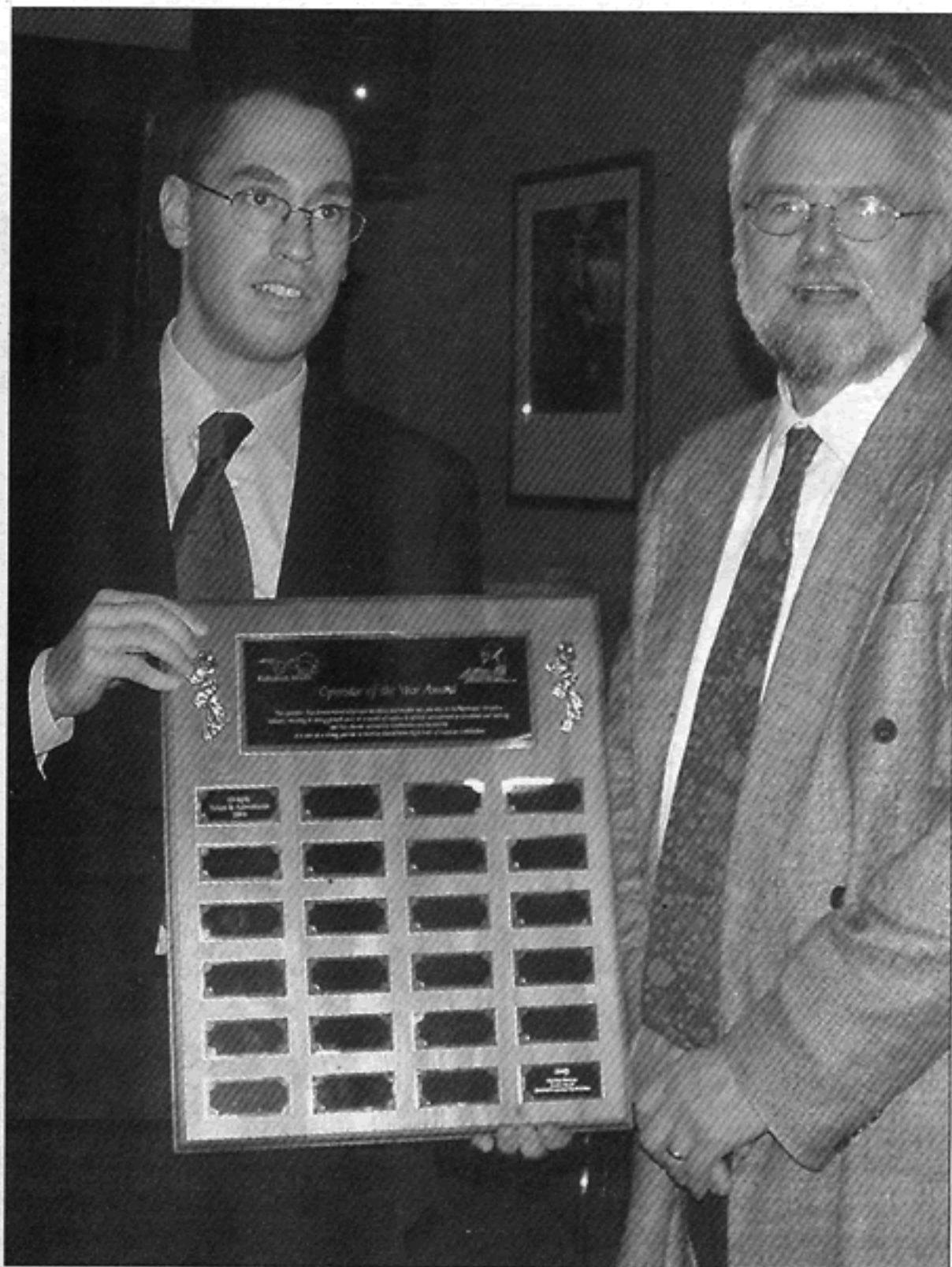
In the summer, sport fishing is big, as is hiking, kayaking and canoeing.

Blachford Lake Lodge can host up to 35 people.

"There's usually five or six full-time staff when we're open," he said.

The lodge also puts a lot of emphasis on hiring the best chefs available.

"We do put a lot of emphasis on food and hire red seal chefs, who are the highest level of accredited chefs in Canada.



Stephan Burnett/NNSL photo

**RWED Minister Brendan Bell, left, presents the Operator of the Year Award to Mike Freeland of Blachford Lake Lodge and Conference Resort during the NWT Tourism awards ceremony on Saturday.**

Customer service is the other thing we put a lot of emphasis on. To some, it's a surprise to offer great food and good service," said Freeland.

Some of the special events the lodge offers include a wine extravaganza,

which is hosted in February with help from the staff at Le Frolic and L'Heritage Restaurant.

In April, the lodge hosts a women's spa weekend, which has also become very popular.