Planning as a Key to Export Development

by Norval Collins, MCIP

CIP has three initiatives for increasing the export of planning services:

- World Link, a six-month student placement intern program;
- Latin American and Caribbean Partnering, a partnering program aimed at building professionalism in planning; and
- participation on the Service Industries and Capital Projects (SICP) Trade Team.

This last initiative, which was part of the Trade Team Canada headed by Industry Canada (ISTC), was highlighted at the 2000 CIP National Conference in Charlottetown.

The mandate of the SICP Trade Team is to capture a larger share of hard/soft infrastructure projects in world markets. It is based on government and industry working together to plan international business development initiatives which, for example, develop information and intelligence, promote alliances, and champion public-private infrastructure programs. The idea is to use professional services, such as planning, architecture, and engineering, to gain access to capital projects. Firms winning capital projects can also sell additional professional services. The team includes a CIP member, along with architects, engineers, interior designers, lawyers, management consultants, and representatives from other professional organizations as well as from ISTC, DFAIT, and CIDA.

The big advantage that Canadian planners can offer the Trade Team involves selling quality of life. Branding identity can be a key to winning export projects, and our reputation for safe, clean, healthy, and prosperous cities is an integral part of the Canadian image abroad.

China, Guatemala, and Poland offer interesting opportunities for export of planning services. Other priorities for the Trade Team are Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, the Philippines, India, Thailand, and Egypt.

With a population of 1.3 billion, China is the seventh largest economy in GDP. The national government is relinquishing absolute power and city-states are becoming more autonomous. Key sectors include agriculture and fisheries, construction, education and training, electric power, environment, forestry, information technologies, mining, oil and gas, and transportation. Chreod Ltd. is an urban and regional planning, economic, management and environmental consulting firm based in Ottawa. Over 90% of Chreod's work is in China, and involves either regional and urban management or capital projects development.

There are also many water-related issues in China, including urban use and discharge systems; industrial discharges and pollution; huge rural population shifts to urban areas; rapidly increasing recreational demand and seaside city construction; and massive coastal aquaculture development.

In Poland, environmental planning is a critical issue. For example, mining and environmental quality are essential to the economic development of the Katowice region, the industrial heartland of Poland. The province of Katowice covers 2 percent of Poland's area but produces 16 percent of its untreated sewage and 52 percent of its industrial waste.

Restructuring of the coal industry will close between 30 and 70 mines, losing 220,000 jobs. On top of this, Poland has been moving towards union with Western Europe since 1990, requiring increased environmental standards in site remediation.

The Bytom Project examined three mines, each of them about 125 years old, in Bytom, a city in the centre of the Katowice region. Each site covered about thirty hectares and included railyards, thirty to forty buildings, and underground workings within the urban core. Planning identified important site elements and appropriate end uses for the sites.

Interesting elements included a mine tower designated as a national heritage site, a 5,000-person bunker thirty metres underground, a ten-metre drop between two sides of the site, and a large residential area for workers. The downtown core was adjacent to one of the sites. All sites had underground storage and contaminated fill.

Guatemala has totally different planning issues. SEGEPLAN, the Secretariat of Planning and Programming for the Presidency, was created following the signing of peace accords. It makes a pluralistic, participatory, democratic and decentralized government its primary goal, the achievement of which is tied to international aid. In this context, the Trade Team is working to develop skills of First Nation Firms, create flexible business networks, develop public-private infrastructure, and foster joint expertise that can be exported to other emerging nations. The planning program at DalTech in Halifax is working with First Nationals to develop a community planning model that will furnish a template for local plans. This process should be applicable to other countries like Guatemala.

The examples provided by these three countries show that opportunities to export planning expertise are not limited to traditional land use planning. Such exports provide work for both small and big firms, and promote the profession in Canada and abroad.

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