

# QUALIFICATIONS-BASED SELECTION

engineerscanada



ingénieurscanada

## Issue

Some government services are awarded to the supplier that submits the lowest bid. Engineers Canada believes that the federal government should adopt regulations that require qualifications-based selection be used for all federal procurement where engineering services are retained.

## Why Is This Important?

In collaboration with the private sector and other levels of government, the federal government has embarked on a \$33 billion infrastructure plan aimed at revitalizing Canada's infrastructure and improving the quality of life of all Canadians. These new investments will involve the need for high-quality engineering services.

Qualifications-based selection is a transparent procurement process that focuses on the qualifications and reliability of the consulting engineer, and is the key to ensuring efficient, sustainable and cost-effective delivery of engineering services. Under this system, a client considers a variety of competing engineering firms, ranks them in the order of qualifications, and negotiates scope of work and fees with the top ranked firm.

Engineering services that are procured solely on the lowest bid can lead to cost savings initially. However, this process can also lead to higher construction, operation and maintenance costs over the lifespan of the infrastructure by encouraging the replication of older, cheaper technologies. A selection method that attaches an overriding significance to the cost of engineering fees can result in a situation where design time limitations restrict the engineer's professional autonomy in finding the best solutions to protect public safety. There may also be simultaneous implications for labour shortages and the relationship between the engineer and the customer.

Adopting a qualifications-based selection process significantly enhances the prospects for innovative approaches in engineering and protection of the environment. The taxpayer benefits through improved safety and long-term savings.

With the large majority of federal government engineering work contracted to outside consulting firms, the method used to select and procure high-quality engineering services is increasingly significant. Other countries already recognize the value of the qualifications-based selection process. Since 1972, the United States federal government has applied it to all federal work. Under the provisions of the Brooks Law, this selection process is a mandatory requirement by the federal government in the selection of design professionals. More than 30 US states have also adopted the same approach for the procurement of engineering services.

Isolated jurisdictions in Canada have acted accordingly; some provincial ministries use this selection process. Moreover, the system is strongly endorsed by the International Federation of Consulting Engineers and by the Association of Canadian Engineering Companies.

## How Can Engineers Canada Contribute?

Engineers Canada is available to provide expertise and guidance to the federal government as it develops its procurement policies. Our industry knowledge can be a valuable asset to the government and can contribute to establishing a framework that incorporates the qualifications-based selection process as a mandatory consideration in the procurement of engineering services.

## THE PROFESSION'S POSITION

*In the interest of public safety, innovation and lower life cycle costs for public works, the federal government should adopt regulations requiring that qualifications-based selection be used for all federal procurement where engineering services are retained. These requirements will provide quality and value while promoting sustainability in infrastructure renewal and lead to life cycle cost savings.*

Last updated: November 2007