ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING ENGINEERING COMPANIES PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Engineers as Trusted Advisors

Equal parts colleague and confidant - a trusted advisor is a valuable asset to clients. Particularly in the demanding world of engineering, a person who brings a high level of professional expertise and personal empathy to the team can play a major role—albeit one that's typically behind the scenes—in shaping a successful project.

By focusing on an in-depth understanding of the needs of the client, and selectively applying their experience, the trusted advisors influence can be felt on many levels and across many projects. As the title implies, a client can expect their trusted advisor to provide constructive advice on major decisions. Because an advisor is not a "yes" person, clients rely on them for honest, balanced, and informed appraisals.

Unfortunately, what we have seen as engineers over recent years is a decline in the value of engineering as a professional service and it is now frequently viewed more as a commodity. This is clearly apparent in the procurement process where proposals are supposed to be evaluated based on both the technical merit of a firm's submission and not just price, however projects are almost exclusively selected on lowest price. What's wrong with this? Upfront procurement decisions have a significant impact not only on the cost and quality of design and construction phases, but on operations and maintenance of infrastructure assets. Engineering and other professional services typically account for only 6-18% of capitals costs on infrastructure projects and 1-2% of total costs over the life-cycle of infrastructure assets. Yet these services dramatically impact all aspects of the financial and operational success of infrastructure for decades. Clients could save money long-term by choosing the "right" engineering firm, the one with the best expertise for the job not the least expensive. Like any professional, not all engineers are created equally and do not all have the same skill set and expertise. It is important to understand that the lowest price does not equal the best value

So, what is the best way to procure engineering services for your infrastructure project? The National Guide to Sustainable Municipal Infrastructure (https://www.acec.ca/files/Publications/InfraguideEnglish.pdf) released a Best Practice for Selecting a Professional Consultant. This Best Practice promotes the principles of Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) rather than price-based selection as the best method for selecting professional engineers and other consultants.

QBS encourages selection of the most qualified team who will work with the owner to jointly develop the required scope of services and appropriate schedule and fees. QBS is similar to hiring people – identify the candidate who will provide the most value to the organization and help the organization achieve its objectives, and then negotiate terms of employment. If the owner and the preferred team cannot come to terms on scope and fees, the client proceeds to the next-preferred team.

QBS encourages innovation and provides better value to taxpayers on capital investments. It provides accountability by ensuring that fees will directly correspond to the level of service and the value of

deliverables being provided. QBS also results in more realistic and predictable budgets and schedules for capital expenditures

ACEC-PEI members want the same thing as all Islanders and that is to ensure that PEI continues to be the best place to work and live in Canada.

About ACEC-PEI

ACEC-PEI is the voice of consulting engineering on PEI. It represents firms that provide professional engineering services to both public and private sector clients. These services include the planning, design and execution of all types of engineering projects, as well as providing independent advice and expertise in a wide range of engineering and engineering-related fields.

The PEI engineering industry has a significant economic impact with consulting engineering firms contributing $17.5 million to provincial GDP annually. The consulting industry create approximately 200 person years of employment annually. With 10 member firms, ACEC-PEI represents the majority of engineers employed by consulting engineering sector on PEI. For more information about ACEC-PEI, please visit www.acecpei.ca.