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House of Commons committee hears why QBS is “better value for taxpayers”

“We’re trying to do timely delivery. We’re trying to do fiscally responsible delivery, and we’re trying to encourage quality and innovation. And at the centre of this is of course the public interest and the tax payers’ dollars.”

This is how John Gamble, President, and CEO of the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies-Canada (ACEC), began his testimony to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimating in Ottawa on February 6.

Mr. Gamble presented a strong, articulate, and passionate argument for the adoption of Qualification Based Selection (QBS) in hiring architects and engineers.

“I would suggest to you that the engineering fees and the architectural fees that you pay at the beginning of a project should not be viewed as an expense to be minimized but as an investment to be leveraged.”

The ability to optimize capital investment, design with new materials, and implement state-of-the-art processes is best achieved when the procurement processes used to hire architects and engineers seek to reward rather than discourage innovation, he said.

“What we find is that when the lowest price is assumed to be the best price, proponents will minimally interpret the scope of work in order to be competitive. That means they’re not looking at alternatives. They’re not looking at the value adds.”

Mr. Gamble provided parliamentarians with a clear Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) roadmap to achieve superior outcomes in federal capital investment and improved business opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and large architecture and engineering firms.

“...at the end of the day you want to make sure you have the right team for the right job, and they have adequate resources to deliver on what you have committed to the Canadian taxpayer. I would suggest that the lowest price is not the best price; the right price is the best price.”

The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, ACEC, municipalities, and public agencies across Canada support QBS for its ability to leverage the best results from



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creative design professionals, said Mr. Gamble. The ability of design professionals to innovate has never been more in demand than now with federal government mandates to drastically improve the energy and functional performance of their capital assets while at the same time supporting social procurement and small and medium-sized enterprises.

“In summary, you get the right outcomes, the right team, realistic schedules and budgets, fewer change orders and disputes, a better business relationship, and at the ends of the day, better service, better quality, and better value for taxpayers.”

(RAIC Director of Practice Support Don Ardiel attended the hearing and prepared this report.)

