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The Construction File

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A Guide to Standards and Practices in the Construction Industry

The Importance of Planholder Lists

Providing Planholder Lists to members is a core service provided for decades by the Construction Associations all across Canada. For example the Construction Association of Victoria, which started in 1912 as a Builders Exchange, is the oldest Construction Association west of Winnipeg and it has likely collected Planholders Lists almost from the very beginning of its 95 year existence. The Vancouver Regional Construction Association has been doing likewise for over 75 years. We did an Internet search for Planholder Lists and got 38,300 hits. These circumstances would seem to demonstrate that Planholder Lists are of some significance in the business world and particularly in the construction industry.

Why is it that accessing Planholder Lists is so important to the construction industry? It is because they are an expedient resource to bidders and suppliers. These businesses rely on this information for the life blood of their procurement world and are a mainstay of the way they do business. The Lists provide these businesses access to the information about who is bidding from one reliable source. If these businesses had to scour the industry looking for who was bidding it would be a time consuming and not always fruitful exercise. Planholders Lists that are collected at the Construction Associations are a centralized and efficient method of gathering information.

Having this information available to the construction community is of great benefit to all those up the construction procurement chain as well. Owners and general contractors are ensured of a wider coverage of trade contractor bidders and suppliers for their projects when Planholder Lists are made available. Given the environment for bidding in these busy times we believe that owners are competing with each other for the strained resources of the industry. To attract contractors to bid your project and to ensure you are maximizing the competition we recommend making the information about your project as easily accessible as possible. That means making the Planholders Lists available to whoever is seeking the information.

Recently, we have been seeing some areas where there is less accessibility to this project information. One question that comes up from time to time on the release of the information is whether its release compromises Freedom of Information legislation in any way. Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Part 2, Division 2, Clause 21 it says, in summary, that the release of third party information can be withheld when it reveals trade secrets, it was supplied in confidence, or results in undue financial loss to anyone. It also requires the information to be released if the third party consents to disclosure. We don't believe that any of these conditions give legal justification for withholding the information.

The other area where we have seen less accessibility is where a public body believes there is a possibility for collusion if the information is provided. The construction industry is far too diverse and competitive; hence, some coordinated action is highly unlikely.

In British Columbia there is almost 100 years of history supporting the sharing of this information to industry. We are not aware of any overwhelming downside that has led the industry to change how it has done business for the past century or desire to change how it continues to do business.

Providing Planholder Lists to those down the construction procurement chain provides efficient access to information for contractors and suppliers. Providing Planholders Lists allows owners and others up the construction procurement chain to maximize the competitiveness for their construction procurement opportunity. In the public sector this has enormous benefit to the taxpayers in British Columbia.

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