



MINISTRY OF FORESTS ON HOT SEAT FOR FLAGRANT DISREGARD OF PROCUREMENT RULES Vanderhoof Fire Zone Hangar RFP Scalded by Construction Industry Watchdogs

September 27th, 2021 – Prince George – A Request for Proposal (RFP) from the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations for a construction project in Vanderhoof is drawing unwanted attention from BC’s construction industry.

The Northern Regional Construction Association (NRCA) has issued a letter of complaint criticizing the Ministry for lack of transparency and fairness with the re-issuance of the RFP for the Vanderhoof Fire Zone Hangar Redevelopment (RFP Number: 21BCWSHQ019). The same project had its RFP process terminated only days after its closing, after small businesses spent thousands of dollars preparing a stipulated price design build submission.

Industry procurement experts immediately raised serious concerns about the impact to small businesses, lack of transparency and perception of preferential treatment on behalf of the owner when the Ministry cancelled the design-build RFP process after the submission deadline was passed, only to immediately reissue a new RFP with the same scope of work.

“The Ministry is an important owner and buyer of construction services in northern BC, and we watch their procurement and project delivery processes closely.” Says Scott Bone, NRCA CEO. “This project is a powerful illustration of failing public procurement and contract delivery practises - a failure that is wasting taxpayer dollars, impacting small businesses at a critical recovery time and presenting unnecessary challenges to the construction industry.”

Industry experts contend that the minor revisions to the Vanderhoof Fire Zone Hanger RFP do not result in the significant scope change that would warrant the cancellation of a procurement process, especially one that has been completed. In such cases, the public owner has several options available to them, including engaging the highest ranked proponent to seek out opportunities to reduce costs and revisit scope.

“A move like this is particularly concerning because the appearance to industry is that the Ministry is showing bias,” says Bone. “This is a design build procurement process and contractors, trades, engineers and other businesses in response to the RFP spent over \$50,000 combined to only to have it cancelled and reposted. The lack of communication and rationale for canceling does not give us confidence that best practises and trade agreements are being followed, or that a preference is not being exerted.” The Association sees the impact to industry due to this specific solicitation process as market abuse.

Public owners are obligated to operate fair, open and transparent procurement processes that allow all interested contractors to bid on equal terms. “Any attempt to neglect standard industry practices and government guidelines is unacceptable and we need to hold public owners accountable” says Bone.

NRCA advises that their outreach to the Ministry to resolve and discuss the situation remains unanswered.



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