

## CIMA+ Looks Overseas for Expansion

In 1986, CIMA+ had 15 employees and did most of its business close to its home base of Laval, Quebec. A decade later, the engineering firm employs more than 500 people and has energy, telecommunications and transportation projects on the go in Asia, South and Central America and the West Indies.

The company's senior associate and chairman of the board, Kazimir Olechnowicz, understands that to secure jobs and assure future growth, it's essential to penetrate an increasingly competitive foreign market.

"We have good people and good potential," he says. "We have developed a lot of expertise in an area where we feel we are the best in the world. If we are to stay at the top, it's important to compare ourselves with the best in the world."

Businesses can't rely on their domestic markets anymore to ensure future prosperity, says Olechnowicz. While CIMA+ once did the bulk of its work on Quebec-based engineering projects, it is now looking far afield for new opportunities.

For CIMA+, the 1997 Team Canada mission to the Asia Pacific provided just those opportunities. In the Philippines, CIMA NAT, a subsidiary of CIMA+, signed memorandums of understanding to form partnerships with the provinces of Leyte and Aklan for the turnkey modernization and expansion of their respective airports. The projects are valued at \$10 million and \$5 million.

CIMA NAT also signed a memorandum of understanding to form a partnership with Philippines Airlines for the design, development and implementation of a turnkey training centre for ground and flight operations, valued at \$50 million.

"It's very motivating to get a project in Asia — to be chosen because we have the best technology and the best prices," Olechnowicz says. Olechnowicz also initiated discussions with the Philippines' energy

minister to discuss developing various hydroelectric projects.

This is not the first time the Team Canada approach has been useful for CIMA+. A CIMA+ affiliate that went on the 1994 Team Canada mission to Asia is now resulting in significant new business in Vietnam, says Olechnowicz.

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Kazimir Olechnowicz  
Senior Associate and Chairman

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"The Canadian government has helped us a lot," he says, adding that Export Development Corporation (EDC) financing is important, particularly in emerging markets that are eager to begin major projects but

lack the necessary capital. Some CIMA+ projects in Vietnam have already benefitted from EDC financing.

Olechnowicz believes Canada is well placed to succeed in international markets. Canada is "very competitive" because of its technological expertise and low dollar, and Canadians are "always well received" when they travel abroad. According to Olechnowicz, many Canadian companies find out when they travel that "we are better than we thought we were."

Olechnowicz also stresses that Canada's bilingual, multicultural makeup is a distinct advantage in the international marketplace. Olechnowicz, who has Polish roots, has already put his Polish language skills to good advantage on business trips to Poland.

It is Olechnowicz's experience that Canadian companies in and out of Quebec work very well together, and that this co-operation leads to important new possibilities in world markets.

