

Education the Entry to Spain's Housing Market

Canadian exporters who want to erect frame houses in Spain are first going to have to build a solid foundation — the basis of which is education!

The fact is, that while the market has lots of potential (*see CONSTRUMAT'95 trade fair article, this page*), Spanish consumers must learn to perceive that a frame house is more than an abandoned, dilapidated cabin deep in the forest, or at best, a little cottage where one might spend a few days "roughing it."

That's the gist of a report, *Introducing Frame Houses in Spain: A Long-Term Project*, received from the Canadian Consulate in Barcelona.

Developing this market, the report says, means starting from scratch. Educating such a market is hard work. It requires in-depth knowledge of local customs. The ability to speak the language is a natural asset. And significant financial and human resources must be devoted to the task.

Those Canadian exporters willing to face these facts are likely to find lucrative rewards.

The Spanish market

Today, a climate of "constructive" optimism seems to be taking hold, following a period of negative growth.

Now, there is an enormous housing shortage and the current housing plan, in effect until 1995, includes subsidies for the construction of 400,000 dwellings.

Spanish companies and promoters are seeking the technology and know-how required to be competitive in the European Single Market. High labour costs and stagnant productivity favour the introduction of new building techniques — ones that improve and compliment (rather than chal-

lenge) traditional building procedures.

For instance, exteriors and finishing, as we know them in Canada, are generally unacceptable in Spain. Brick or stone must be a main component. Wall-to-wall carpeting is unacceptable; the kitchen and bathroom walls must be covered in ceramic.

These requirements, however, do not pose a problem to Canadians,

thanks to their technological flexibility. As well, Canadian companies have no European competition in this sector.

Canadian companies wishing to participate in the Spanish residential construction market or wishing to discuss the adaptability of their products or services to this market may contact René-François Désamoré, Canadian Consulate, Barcelona, Spain. Fax: (343) 410-7755.

Barcelona Hosts Building Expo ...

Barcelona — One of Europe's principal construction-sector events and the most important of its kind in the Mediterranean region will be held here April 3-8, 1995.

This **International Building Exhibition (CONSTRUMAT'95)** takes place every two years and, once again, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) is organizing a national stand for which it now is recruiting participants.

The last event, held in 1993, attracted 3,321 exhibitors and 210,135 professional visitors. Similar figures are expected for **CONSTRUMAT'95**, which will feature the latest innovations and technologies that relate to 18 different sectors of the construction industry.

For further information on this international building exhibition, contact Gaston Thompson, General Manager, Canadian Participation, Trade Fairs and Missions-Europe, Trade Development Division, Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa K1A 0G2. Tel.: (613) 992-7001. Fax: (613) 944-1008.

And Brussels Builds with Batibouw!

Brussels — Building materials and components companies interested in establishing or further penetrating foreign markets are likely to be interested in participating in **BATIBOUW'95**, being held in this Belgian capital March 2-12, 1995.

At this trade fair, now in its 36th year, Canada will have a national pavilion, with Canadian participation being organized by Rhéal Leroux and Associates in collaboration with the Canadian Embassy in Brussels.

Participants, now being recruited, will be exhibiting such products

as Canadian timber frame construction, log homes, furniture stock, building systems and consulting services. An added feature is that they can enhance the appearance of their booths through the use of different floor coverings, kitchen cabinets and fences.

Organizers of **BATIBOUW'95** indicate that participation in this event could open doors to markets in Belgium (annual Canadian sales now exceed \$1 billion) as well as in other countries of Europe (Belgium has good ports and onward transportation facilities to

Continued on page 6 — Batibouw