

# The Canadian Engineer

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## The Canadian Engineer

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### THE LOWEST TENDER?

Several important tenders, and not the lowest received, have recently been accepted by public bodies. Their acceptance has been the matter of considerable comment, both by members of the corporation and managers of the firms interested.

In the advertisement calling for tenders it is always inserted that "the lowest or any tender will not necessarily be accepted." Custom has prescribed that as a general thing the lowest tender shall be accepted. This perhaps guards against the suggestion of impropriety between the representatives of the seller and the buyer.

Several awards have been made in which the lowest tender was made by firms in Great Britain or by foreign firms. In one or two notable instances the contract was given to a Canadian firm, even although it was admitted their tender was somewhat higher than outside competitors.

This created discussion, more particularly on the part of firms who had gone to the expense of estimating and submitting prices. In some cases these expenses were considerable, and the more keen is competition the more heavy is the expense.

Although business is business, there is considerable sentiment attached with most business propositions, and we do not wonder in awarding the contracts that occasionally sentiment has something to do with the award. We have known engineering and contracting firms to pay more for a particular machine or equipment largely because they have been used to that particular style of installation, and sometimes because they are intimately acquainted with the sales manager or managing director of these concerns. When the manager of a Canadian concern, employing from one to five thousand men, comes before a city council and pleads for the acceptance of his tender, pointing to the fact that his firm is leaving weekly in the municipality or Province many thousands of dollars, that the money paid to foreign firms goes out of the country, we are not surprised that occasionally he is successful in having his tender—which is not the lowest—accepted.

Aside from this sentiment, there are frequently good business reasons for accepting other than the lowest tender. The plant may be already partly equipped with machinery with which the men have become familiar. To add further equipment of the same design would cause much less confusion than the installing of machinery different in design and requiring a different method of operation.

To inspect the output of a plant and the products of a firm with which Canadian engineers are not familiar, and which is thousands of miles away, is sometimes expensive, so that if you add to the contract price the cost of inspection, it is possible that the next to the lowest tender may be the more reasonable.