
4.0 Entering the U.S. Market

Despite our many similarities, the U.S. is a different market.

Protectionism is taking hold in some sectors.

Government procurement often requires having a local branch office fully staffed by professionals.

4.1 The Market Environment

Although there are generally few constraints for Canadian architects seeking to practice in the U.S. which do not apply equally to American architects, there are some inherent conditions that differ from Canada and which, if not adequately addressed at the outset, can seriously erode the chances for market penetration by Canadian firms. They consist of political, economic, commercial, regulatory and socio-cultural constraints that are described below. It must be noted that, as a result of negotiations currently underway on liberalized trade between Canada and the U.S., and the RAIC's parallel series of formal discussion with the American Institute of Architects, many of these constraints could be mitigated by the end of 1987. Already, as a result of joint representations to their respective governments, the RAIC and AIA have succeeded in removing duties on drawings entering the U.S. and greatly reducing those being brought into Canada. Firms seeking to export to the United States should make a special effort to follow the negotiations and contact the RAIC for clarification of any perceived changes that may be taking place.

Although directed primarily at the Japanese with whom the U.S. has a persistently large trade deficit, the growing sense of protectionism in Congress, in many State governments, and among an increasing portion of the private sector in the U.S. represents a possible impediment to market entry by Canadian firms. Those who have sought to geographically diversify their practices in Canada by establishing in other provinces understand the kinds of political and attitudinal issues that must be faced.

Although the attitude of many Americans that "our architects are the best - why hire Canadians?" is perhaps understandable, there are specific niches in urban development and building construction in which Canadian expertise is unique. The limiting of market access through blatant protectionist measures has not yet been encountered by Canadian architects. However, they should be aware that, in some sectors (certainly not widespread), attitudes are not conducive to awarding of commissions to foreigners.