



GOVERNMENT MARKETS

Market Overview

Despite the spectacular success of the Irish economy in recent years, a major regional imbalance remains in economic development in Ireland. The infrastructure in major urban centres is under pressure from an upsurge in commercial and business activity coupled with a resultant population increase. By contrast, rural and smaller urban areas have lagged behind. To address this issue and related problems, **the Irish government has launched a seven-year National Development Plan for 2000-06**, with IR£40.5 billion (over C\$72 billion) committed to the Plan. Most observers agree that it will take longer than seven years to implement the Plan, and that lack of capacity among Irish firms will mean substantial business opportunities for foreign firms for another decade. Some

51% of Plan funds has been earmarked for economic and social infrastructure, i.e., national roads, public transport, water and wastewater, coastal protection, energy, social and affordable housing, and health capital. Two thirds of the total expenditure will occur in the regions outside Dublin. There will also be significant government aid to industry, agriculture and fisheries.

Opportunities

Many of the proposed works are of a scale that might interest Canadian firms, in the context of relatively manageable competition from other major foreign players. In this European market, the English language would be a significant asset to any Canadian contractors looking for business. Firms that could also provide

English-speaking labourers from Canada would also be highly pursued. Of interest to seasonal labourers in Canada is the mild Irish climate, which permits year-round construction. More details of the National Development Plan are available at <http://www.ndp.ie>

Twice monthly, the Commercial Division of the Canadian Embassy in Dublin carefully selects a variety of Irish government tenders for inclusion on the Web site of the International Business Opportunities Centre (IBOC). These projects may be in the sectors of construction, medical, consultancy services or defence. On occasion, contact with the Canadian Embassy is necessary to obtain further information on the interested tenders. Otherwise, full contact details are available on the IBOC Web site at <http://www.iboc.gc.ca>

