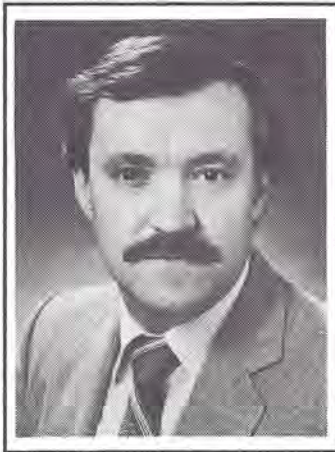


# The Canadian Economic Development Professional



**Frank Miele B.E.S., Ec.D.**

Frank Miele is Executive Director of the City of Scarborough's Economic Development Department and a lecturer at Centennial College. He is also a Director of the Industrial Developers Association of Canada and Chairman of the Ontario Industrial Development Council Inc. Journal Committee. He is a graduate from the University of Waterloo with an Honours Degree in Urban and Regional Planning and a minor in Political Science. He has also received a diploma in Economic Development from the same university.

Frank is the Industrial Developers Association of Canada 1988 Conference Chairman. The theme of the Conference is "The Importance of Trade".

The environment in which Economic Development Professionals work is becoming increasingly complex. They must be concerned with the total social and economic well-being of a region or community, and must be able to work with both private and public sectors, as well as with the many not-for-profit organizations in a community. Being prepared for this task demands an increasing sophisticated academic preparation and on-going professional development. This is why the national association, IDAC, has developed an extensive educational program with the University of Waterloo, and introduced a certificate program for its members and is embarking on an enhanced publication program.

Historically, much of what was labelled "Economic Development" is seen today as having dealt with only one aspect of industrial development, i.e. focusing attention solely upon the attraction of manufacturing industry to a community or a region. Increasingly, however, all elements related to the social and economic well-being of a region must be considered by the "total" professional. He or she must be well qualified to provide factual information in an intelligent and business-like man-

ner, in order to help industry of all types find the optimum location for profit.

The environment within which the Economic Development Professional (EDP) must work is undergoing major transformations. These changes are affecting the structure and practice of the profession of economic development.

A more balanced definition of economic development is "the process of creating wealth through the mobilization of human, financial, capital, physical and natural resources to generate marketable goods and services." The economic developer's role is to influence the process for the benefit of the community through expansion of job opportunities and the tax base. The overall objectives are to attract new investments, retain or create jobs, generate tax revenues, secure the community's tax base and promote the community's financial health.

## Identifying the Professional

There are three types of sectors where the EDP is actively involved:



- Private Sector
- Public sector
- Independent or not-for-profit sector.

In the private sector, the EDP's role is to increase the sector's marketing opportunities. Examples in this category include dealing with railroads, banks, utilities, real estate developers and construction firms.

The public sector has been long served by the various provincial governments. In the past decade, local governments have become increasingly active in implementing their own Economic Development Departments, and Canadian municipalities are now strongly represented by EDPs.

In the not-for-profit category, there are community interest groups and educational institutions which have also expanded their involvement in the economic development process. EDPs now work closer with community colleges and universities, neighbourhood organizations and other community-based organizations. In some ways, not-for-profit organizations are the best form of local participation in economic development because they are present in many facets of a community life, e.g. manufacturing, tourism, labour, services and government. However, in practice, there are numerous gaps and disadvantages in implementing and promoting a not-for-profit organization. Co-ordinating and maintaining interest with the volunteer is extremely difficult at the small-scale local level.

In general, the "total" economic development professional serves as the catalyst for economic development. Working together with many other professionals is the essential ingredient which the EDP strives for in any successful endeavor.

The economic development professional has been described as one whose primary vocation is working to secure new and expanded economic enterprise for his or her area of service. Despite the truly professional nature of this task, the economic development professional is far behind other professions in financial remuneration - and this is due to the fact that there is lack of an academic base. Recognition of this prompted the Industrial Developers Association of Canada (IDAC), in conjunction with the University of Waterloo, to formulate an extensive educational program.

The requirements of the professional in terms of educational preparation are just as demanding as in other professions such as engineering, accounting or law, since the economic development practitioner must be skilled in economic geography,

real estate, applied science and many other related fields in order to achieve any degree of success.

## The Educated Economic Development Professional

One of the primary objectives of IDAC is continuing education for the practicing economic developer. With the competitive marketplace today, it is absolutely essential that the economic developer maintain a high standard of education in his field.

Beginning in 1972, IDAC and the University of Waterloo created a program which focused on the complex issues facing both the new and experienced practitioners. Today, this program has become a cornerstone in the economic development scene in Canada. Presently, there are two forms of academic recognition; a certificate and a diploma.

### Certificate in Economic Development

Awarded jointly by the Faculty of Environmental Studies of the University and IDAC, the requirements for the certificate include full time attendance at two sessions, each of which extends over a six day period, as well as the satisfactory completion of term work assigned during the sessions. A unique blend of the conceptual and practical is presented by lecturers from the private and public sectors, as well as academic specialists, and the programs include discussions, projects, field trips and case studies.

In all, the certificate course provides and introduction to all aspects of economic development - planning, industrial parks and buildings, management principles, finance, communication and public relations, tourism, and many other subjects.

### Diploma in Economic Development

The diploma is awarded by the University Senate to candidates who fulfill specific requirements established by the University of Waterloo.

To be eligible to receive a Diploma in Economic Development a candidate must comply with the following requirements:

- completion of the certificate program or documented proof of equivalent formal training in



Economic Development (an equivalent is the program offered by Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, U.S.A.)

- Attendance at two advanced seminars of the participant's choice at the University of Waterloo, IDAC Annual Conferences, or approved and accredited seminars offered in other provinces across Canada, and
- Preparation of an in-depth research paper of approximately 50 pages dealing with some particular aspect of economic development.

### **The Seminars**

Each year, three seminars are offered by the University and IDAC. Two of the three day seminars are offered on the University of Waterloo Campus, and the third seminar is traditionally offered in conjunction with the Annual IDAC Conference which is held in various regions in Canada. The topics reflect current concerns or needs, and one or more specialists are invited to develop a seminar, providing depth and challenge to all who attend.

A wide variety of educational subjects are offered both to IDAC members and non-members in such diverse areas as finance and loan packaging, plant location or relocation, computer applications in economic development, community planning and urban development strategies, managerial skills necessary in administering a sound economic development organization, and a host of other subjects which the professional economic developer must be familiar with in order to address today's issues and community concerns.

### **Certified Economic Development Professional**

In Canada, IDAC has accredited roughly 90 economic development professionals with the Ec.D. designation. This Canada-wide program initiated by IDAC in 1983 has set the standards for professional practitioners in the field of Economic Development. A minimum of three years' experience, certain educational prerequisites, and a written and oral examination for certification in the profession are required in order to become eligible for Ec.D. designation. Every year, IDAC offers several different opportunities throughout the country to sit the Ec.D. examinations.

Once the designation has been received, the professional must maintain it by re-certifying every

three years. This is accomplished by attending various continuing educational activities and conferences throughout Canada. Increasingly, the Ec.D. designation has become a common prerequisite for employers seeking the skilled economic development professional.

### **Economic Development Publications**

IDAC has established an economic development journal in association with the Economic Development Program at the University of Waterloo which contains a variety of articles from across Canada written by Economic Development practitioners.

Furthermore, IDAC is currently in the process of revamping their newsletter. It will be published bi-monthly and will report on current IDAC activities, including the various educational programs planned for the upcoming months; it will also acquaint the membership with the availability of new positions across the country.

The University of Waterloo, Faculty of Environmental Studies, maintains a library of theses developed by diploma student graduates on a wide variety of subjects. These theses are available for reproduction and viewing by contacting the Economic Development Office at the University.

### **Scholarships Offered**

The Department of Regional Industrial Expansion provided IDAC with monies to permit Economic Development Practitioners across the country to apply for scholarships of up to \$500 to further their education. IDAC provides ten scholarships annually to those individuals seeking financial assistance to attend the University of Waterloo seminars and Year 1 and 2 courses. Several provinces also provide scholarships for the same purpose.

### **Conclusions**

In Canada, as in United States, Economic Development is a misunderstood profession. However, the interface with other leaders at national, provincial and community levels increasingly is becoming an important factor in heightening levels of awareness about the Economic Development profession.

Most importantly, all economic development professionals in Canada have a common desire to participate in an interchange of ideas on the prin-

ciples, practices and experiences in the field of economic development, and to encourage high standards of personal and professional conduct among the people engaged in the profession.

Since all economic development professionals deal with clients who often request confidentiality, it is not surprising that our profession is frequently misunderstood. There is a cliché in the profession which says that "you shoot at everything that flies and take credit for everything that falls." However, the economic development professional does not care who gets the credit as long as the region or the sponsor whom he or she represents gets the business. As this becomes better recognized, the Economic Development Professional's task will become a much easier one.

For further information on becoming a new or associate member of IDAC, contact Marilyn Austin, Executive Director of IDAC, at (416) 822-8771.