

## **32. Special Project Management for Travel Industry Development Subsidiary Agreement (TIDSA), B.C. Government**

The British Columbia Government in 1982, decided that they needed to stimulate the Travel Industry. To that end they funded TIDSA with \$60 million. Deserving Applicants were awarded grants to construct infrastructure that would attract tourists.

Once a grant is approved, a local Committee becomes responsible to implement the project. The local Municipality or Regional District must be signatory to the agreement to ensure that the grant is spent in the specified fashion.

There is a definitive time frame for completion. A clause in the contract states that the Representative has the right to engage a special Project Manager (SPM) to ensure that the project gets completed within the time frame. There are strict controls that are similar to a Bankruptcy Agent, that simply takes over the project.

This SPM first analyzes the status of the project and reports to BMcM and offers an opinion as to whether the project can be completed for the funding available in the grant with the resources at that location. The SPM then dictates what must take place under the direction of BMcM. The Committee does not have any choice other than to cooperate or lose entire control of the project.

The B.C. Government Agent was Brian McMahon (BMcM), stationed near Victoria, B.C

### **a. Restore Miners' Hall - Rossland, B.C.**



The Miner's Hall was built in the late 1890s to house the first union in British Columbia that was organized by the Miners working at the mines in Rossland.

A theatre was the feature on the main floor and meeting rooms on the lower level.

The existing building was deteriorating and needed structural attention.

I attended the first Rossland Miners Hall Restoration Meeting with BMcM when he introduced me. I am not sure if people from City Council (I worked with them on many projects) may have suggested my name to BMcM.

I was provided all the information that the Committee had and took to my office for review before I could make a report. What was obvious was the extremely high Architectural budget of almost \$50,000. It was also suspect because the Architect was a young lady who was not a member of the RIABC as she was still articling. She was also on the Board which may be a conflict of interest.

My preliminary report suggested that I investigate competitive pricing for architectural fees as professional fees seemed out of line with the total budget.

I was able to find a practicing Architect for about \$16,000 and it was my recommendation that this person take over.

The Project was completed within the original budget but unfortunately the young lady was very upset and resigned.

I found that was part of the responsibility of the job.

**b. Dorothy Lake Development - Invermere, B.C.**

Success on the Miners Hall prompted BMcM to offer a second project that I was able to Project Manage for TIDSA as it too became subject to special management when the committee was unable to come to consensus as to design and development.

The project involved a cleanup of a lake to improve a park and build campsites for tourists.

Apart from normal construction and design issues, on one trip, Kim (my son) came along with me to keep me company. We had just returned from the Veregin School Reunion and somehow, we were running late for my meeting. We had just passed Canal Flats and now on the way past the lake when I noticed this Police Car coming toward me and quickly checked my speedometer and yes it read 130 Km/hr and I noted the "Cowboy" would be turning around to follow me.

I commented to Kim that it will take him about 3 km before he catches us so pull out the registration from the glove compartment as I fumbled for my wallet and driver's licence therein.

The next sequence of events is predictable as he lowered his head into my open window, and he could see that I was definitely in a hurry, but he slowly started questions like:

"So where are you from?"

"Castlegar, can't you see my Driver's Licence?"

"Where are you really from?" he continued very methodically.

I did not realize that Kim was wearing a cap with Veregin School Reunion on it, but I answered, "Pelly Saskatchewan."

"Who do you know in Pelly?" as I wondered when this ordeal is going to be over as I am not getting to the meeting any faster.

"Well alright, 'Big Dave', I mean Lloyd Davidson was in my graduating class and there was Richard Dundas, Roberta MacLise....."

"Where did Lloyd live?" My God how long will this take, I thought?

I think he was 3 miles West of Pelly, but I am not sure whether he lived North or South of the highway.

"He lived South of the highway and was my neighbor", he confided to me.

"No shit! So, who are you?" I became interested.

"I am \_\_\_? \_\_\_ Johnson" he said with a smile.

"So, you are obviously late for something," he added. "Where is the hurry?"

"Invermere, I am the Project Manager for the Dorothy Lake Project, and I am late for the meeting," I was puzzled as he was returning the papers to me.

"There is no other roadblock between here and Invermere, Keep the wheels on the pavement," as he returned to his squad car.

Kim looked at me and asked, "How did we get away with that one?"

"That is an easy answer," as I gathered speed again. "You need to come from Pelly!"



The lake needed aeration as it had become polluted. A pump was installed in the middle of the lake to circulate the water. The balance involved topsoil, grading and landscaping.

It was another successful project

c. Harbour Front Development, Port Alberni, B.C.



The City of Port Alberni was desirous to attract Tourists to the Industrial Town and so proposed to mimic the Granville Harbour Front development designed by Hotson Architects.

This \$1.8 million project was a concern to BMcM, and he had mentioned that he may need to have me look at it at some point.

This particular chilly and rainy November Friday, I had just returned from a stressful trip to Elkford, walked into the house, laid down on the floor to watch TV with my children when the phone rings. Marilyn says its Brian for you.

“Pack a bag as you are catching the plane tomorrow to Whitehorse”, he starts, “We will have a meeting on Port Alberni tomorrow night followed by you travelling back to Vancouver to meet with Hotson Architects and then on to Port Alberni to meet with the Committee. The project is going for a shit, and we have to get it on track.”

“You have to be out of your mind”, I was seriously upset, “I have no drawings and absolutely no information on this project. How can I get into an intelligent discussion? It’s a waste of time. Let’s meet when you come back to civilization.”

“That’s the problem, I need to travel by canoe and hike into the wilderness for two weeks on this other project,” he explained “but Port Alberni is in trouble and needs action now!”

I protested as I really was too tired to go anywhere and especially Whitehorse.

“The preliminary drawings will be put on the plane and will arrive in Whitehorse the same time as you”, this guy does not quit.

Brian meets me at the Whitehorse airport and lets me check in to the hotel. We decide that we should have our first meeting on Port Alberni before dinner.

From the information that I received, it appeared that the Committee and Architect may be at odds and that was contributing to the lack of progress. Obviously, I needed to meet separately with both before I could assess the problem and begin a process to resolve it into a working project.

We decided that I need to present the preliminary drawings to Contractors to determine whether there was enough funding for the project as well as establish a schedule.

“Do the Port Alberni people know that I am coming and my name?” I was not prepared for his answer.

“No,” he responded, “you are coming in cold. They will react but I will not be in communication range for at least two weeks. This is your show!”

I boarded the plane from Whitehorse later afternoon Sunday and came to Vancouver while Brian went off into the Yukon wilderness.

I found Norman Hotson, Architects, offices and was there Monday morning at 0900 hours. The secretary was not sure that I could see him as he was very busy, she cautioned.

“Tell him it is very important and that I have a serious message from Brian McMahon of TIDSA,” I emphatically stated, “I need to see him now!”

I was ushered into his office, and he gave me the “once over” and waited for me to speak. I explained the TIDSA agreement that his client, Port Alberni Harbour Front Committee was signatory to with the BC Government. The SPM clause is being exercised and introduced myself. I requested the latest drawings on the project.

He was silent for a few minutes and then advised that he was unable to provide drawings without his client’s permission.

“Your client is not aware at this moment that I am the SPM as I am on my way to Port Alberni to meet with them today,” I informed him, “I need your drawings so that I may prepare myself for that meeting.”

“I am sorry, but I cannot comply with your request without my client’s authority,” as I realized he was correct and I needed to meet with his client ASAP, to get this project moving.

I rented a car and took the ferry over to Nanaimo and drove to Port Alberni for my first time on that part of Vancouver Island. I was in a hurry to catch the City Administrator for Port Alberni before quitting time and arrived about 3:30 P.M.

The Receptionist wanted to know my purpose and did I have an appointment. Again, I insisted that I had a message from Brian McMahon of TIDSA.

The Administrator was shocked at my message and that I needed him to advise the Architect to release the Harbour Front drawings to me so that I could get to work.

“How do I know you are telling me the truth as Brian has not advised me that you are coming,” he commented, “I will need to assemble the Committee before I can take any action.”

“I suggest calling the Directors to an Emergency Meeting tonight”, I commanded, “so that I can get on with my mission!”

The CAO understood that I was serious and what he needed to do next.

The Port Alberni Harbour Front Committee (PAHFC) met in the City Council Chambers at 7:00 P.M. that night. It was probably the toughest meeting of the Three (3) TIDSA projects:

1. The Chair was a lady Mayor, and she was not polite at all when she demanded to know who I was and why did Brian McMahon not advise them.
2. I politely drew attention to the SPM clause in the TIDSA Contract. My role is to be part of the solution and not interpreted as a problem. Brian had made an action decision that could not wait until he returns from the Yukon in about three (3) weeks. Why doesn't the meeting discuss and list all the reasons for the project being behind schedule?
3. Meanwhile all twelve (12) Directors gave me those 'dirty looks' like as if I just announced that I represent the Devil.
4. Slowly it all unfolded:
  - a. I was able to obtain a list of the all the issues that were in dispute with the Architect and that “he was not listening to what will work in Port Alberni”.
  - b. I promised to meet with him the next day and attempt to include all in his drawings, but I reminded them that his role was advice as he had completed a successful design of Granville Harbour Front and likely the reason why they hired him. To provide his advice and expertise.
  - c. They agreed to have Hotson work with me.

I met with the Architect the next day and he admitted that he was having difficulty with the Committee. I explained that my role is have him consider all their suggestions but complete a set of Tender Drawings in two (2) weeks. That I would test the marketplace and see if a suitable General Contractor can be selected with a public tender process. We can then combine all the factors from one “pot”.

- Committee Desires
- Architectural Advice
- Construction budget

The ultimate objective is to get a compromised project completed within the time frame and grant allocation of the TIDSA Agreement.

He agreed to do that.

I was able to return to Trail and outline the schedule of events for the PSHFC as follows:

1. Receive Hotson Tender Drawings
2. Advertise for construction contractors
3. Submit a progress report to PAHDC and TIDSA
4. In Review for budget purposes
5. Meet with General Contractor and settle a final Contract Price
6. Direct Hotson regarding changes and implement final construction drawings for the contract documents
7. Obtain final approval of PAHFC and TIDSA
8. Execute construction contract
9. Hire a Clerk of Works
10. Proceed with construction
11. EVC to attend monthly (or as required) progress meetings

The project was completed successfully, on time and on budget with about \$20,000 under budget that the Committee used for a gala celebration complete with a Salmon Barb-B-Q.

See the following for related stories:

1. See my blog at [https://elmerverigin.wordpress.com/Quick Change Artist](https://elmerverigin.wordpress.com/Quick%20Change%20Artist)
2. Also, [https://elmerverigin.wordpress.com/Stoneboat Captain](https://elmerverigin.wordpress.com/Stoneboat%20Captain)

#### ***d. Doukhobor Village Improvements***

After all the stress that these TIDSA projects afforded me, I sat down with Brian and told him “You owe me a favour now!”

After discussion I explained that the Doukhobor Village needed to be brought to a “destination tourist attraction”. I outlined my vision:

1. A garden
2. Buggy and horse rides from the Village across the Brilliant Bridge up to the Verigin Tomb and return
3. Everyone dresses in Doukhobor traditional clothes
4. A “floating dove” over the orchard
5. Other

Brian’s first reaction was it will not work. The next time we met he offered \$1.3 million for this project.

I had to obtain a RDCK approval to sign the TIDSA contract as required.

I called a meeting with Mayor Audrey Moore and the RDCK. Here is how it unfolded and ultimately folded:

1. The RDCK (the DV was within the RDCK at that time) would not agree to this project until the City of Castlegar agrees to pay its portion of the RDCK Planner. The city response is

that it has a Planner so it will not pay for the RDCK Planner. This argument continued throughout.

2. The Planner for the RDCK did cooperate and provided some much-needed design support.
3. The combined group did not believe that the TIDSA grant was real until Brian showed up to a meeting and confirmed.
4. Elmer Verigin got called to start the International Pavilions at Expo '86 and had to be away a great deal.
5. The Committee continued their Planner Funding dispute between CoC and RDCK.
6. Brian came to see me in my Marbella offices in Vancouver:
  - a. With you away I cannot see how this municipal dispute will get resolved.
  - b. I have no confidence in the local people getting this project completed.
  - c. I have political pressure to fund a project in Dawson Creek.
7. This is how the Doukhobor Village lost \$1.3 million in grants.

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