



Canadian Trade Successes 11-06
Scatliff+Miller+Murray Inc.

SUCCESS BY CHANCE...OR BY DESIGN

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Key Quotation:

The experience Scatliff+Miller+Murray gained from working with Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada's programs and services gave them the background and resources they needed to pursue other projects. "We learned a lot about the system and we travelled to China, we learned about visas and how to connect, we learned about their currency, their culture," Michael Scatliff recalls. "So while the initial project wasn't directly fruitful, eventually it gave us the background and experience to become successful in China."

Story details:

According to Michael Scatliff, President of Winnipeg-based Scatliff+Miller+Murray Inc., the company broke into the international market somewhat by chance. In 1999, a friend proposed that he enter a landscape design competition in Sanya, China. His friend was hoping to relocate to Asia, and wanted to represent Scatliff+Miller+Murray if they won the contract. Scatliff agreed, somewhat reluctantly, and his landscape architecture firm ended up winning the competition, beating finalists from San Francisco and Barcelona.

It was more than just loyalty to a friend that swayed Scatliff's decision to enter the competition. In a development that he describes as serendipitous, his company was approached by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada at the same time that he was considering entering the competition in Sanya. "[DFAIT] found us," he says. "I think it was a trade commissioner with the Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada [who contacted me]... We said we were

interested in pursuing work in China.” DFAIT provided valuable financial assistance toward printing, travel and translation costs during the company’s negotiations in Sanya. “We likely would not have gone ahead with the competition without DFAIT’s support,” he explains.

The experience Scatliff+Miller+Murray gained from working with DFAIT gave them the background and resources they needed to pursue other projects. “We learned a lot about the system and we travelled to China. We learned about visas and how to connect, we learned about their currency, their culture,” he recalls. “So while the initial project wasn’t directly fruitful, eventually it gave us the background and experience to become successful in China.”

That success came in the form of “Spring Vitality,” a new 90-acre (36.4 hectare) multifamily residential/commercial/office development in Beijing. Scatliff+Miller+Murray won the contract to design the community in 2002. Since then, “Spring Vitality” has been awarded two prestigious awards: the *People’s Republic of China, Planning and Residential Development Associates—Ideal Community Award of Excellence* and the *People’s Republic of China, Ministry of Construction Top Environmental Design Award*.

Despite his success in China, Scatliff is reluctant to expand his business just yet. He has faced some challenges in bringing Scatliff+Miller+Murray into the foreign market due to concerns about currency exchange. “The single greatest risk to Canadian companies is ... what currency they’re going to get paid in,” he explains. His advice to businesses trying to reach into the Asian market is to ensure that they are paid in either U.S. or Canadian dollars.

Despite hitting a few bumps along the road, Scatliff is not ready to give up. His firm has established a sister company in China and is on the lookout for future developments.